LIBRARY OF THE
WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

BIBLIOTHÈQUE
DU CONSEIL ŒCUMÉNIQUE

This book must be returned not later than
Ce livre doit être rendu au plus tard à la date
inscrite ci-après

18 NOV. 1995	
1 NOV. 2004	

21822

ÖKUMENISCHER RAT
FÜR PRAKTISCHES CHRISTENTUM
41, Avenue de Champel – GENF

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
World Council of Churches

https://archive.org/details/wcclifework076

FIVE MINUTES TO TWELVE

OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR

PROTESTANT EUROPE, ITS CRISIS AND OUTLOOK (WITH GEORGE STEWART, D.D.)

KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

RELIGION AND REVOLUTION

CHURCH AND STATE ON THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT

280.242
K 281 f

FIVE MINUTES TO TWELVE

A Spiritual Interpretation of the Oxford and Edinburgh Conferences

ADOLF KELLER, D.D., LL.D.

COKESBURY PRESS
NASHVILLE

LIBRARY
World Council of Churches
150, route de Ferney, GENEVA

FIVE MINUTES TO TWELVE
Copyright, MCMXXXVIII
By Whitmore & Smith

All rights in this book are reserved. No part of the text may be reproduced in any form without written permission of the publishers, except brief quotations used in connection with reviews in a magazine or newspaper.

SET UP, ELECTROTYPED, PRINTED, AND BOUND
BY THE PARTHENON PRESS AT NASHVILLE
TENNESSEE, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

C

PREFACE

WHEN I seek a symbol for expressing the life and work of the World Conferences of the Churches which were held at Oxford and Edinburgh last summer, what they did and what they received, I find no better one than that of the last Sonata of Beethoven. Its two parts seem to contrast human effort and divine grace. When I hear the first part I think I am listening to the thunder of human will making a tremendous effort to conquer a hostile world and to impose on it its own law. When I hear the second part, the immortal "Adagio," it seems to me that it expresses symbolically what man cannot attain by his own exertion but what is given to him by divine grace. The dynamic explosion of human energy seems to be at an end and is completed and compensated by a gift from above which man cannot strive for, but must simply receive and accept even as thirsty meadows drink in the rain from heaven.

In retrospect, the two world conferences of the churches, that of Life and Work in Oxford, and that of Faith and Order in Edinburgh, have a similarly double aspect. The one shows a unique effort of

Christianity to transform the world by thinking, organizing, planning, fighting, and building; by an act of faith and the labors of mind and body—Israel holding the trowel in one hand and the sword in the other while building the Holy City.

The other aspect is the higher and largely hidden spiritual life of the conferences which is not the fruit of our battles, or constructive efforts, but of our quiet and receptive hours when we listened to the word of God, to the gentle breeze of the Holy Spirit, and let Him accomplish and give what we could not attain by an effort of our will—Mary sitting at the feet of the Master.

The outpouring of Christian thought and energy at these conferences can be seen in the official reports, in the description of the daily routine of the conferences, in the resolutions and programs. What the writer, as a listener at Oxford and Edinburgh, is trying to set forth in the present book, is that fertile stillness, in which we received a spiritual gift, the spiritual experience which created and accompanied the effort of will like some heavenly music. The writer believes that the labors and achievements of the conferences must be interpreted in the light of that spiritual experience which we received in listening to

the word of God. We should lose the better part of the blessing which we bore away if we did not try to keep alive, and to spread abroad by our witness, this spiritual experience which touched us, not always, but now and then, lightly as the wing of a bird, in flying, might caress our faces.

This little book was not so much written as received. It was born while the writer participated in the evangelistic crusade and in the unforgettable hours of prayer and spiritual fellowship of the National Preaching Mission, which, under the aegis of the Federal Council of Churches, is sweeping over the United States of America. May it stand as a necessarily subjective memento of gratitude for a spiritual blessing received during that mission which tried to interpret the life and work of those conferences to our churches at home and to confront them with the great problems raised at Oxford and Edinburgh.

For those who are not in position to read the official reports or other books on the conferences, and are not acquainted with their history, I may add the following short historical summary.

The Conference on Life and Work took place at Oxford in July, 1937, and was focused on the central theme, "Church, Community, and State." It sought

to re-think the message of the Church and to apply it to present-day conditions in the economic, social, educational, and political life of the nations.

The Conference on Faith and Order convened at Edinburgh in August, 1937, and dealt with the dogmatic and ecclesiastical questions confronting the churches, and more specifically with the problem of church unity on the basis of creed and doctrine. Its endeavor was to find out how much unity already exists in this field among the various churches, and it discussed the controversial problems which keep them still apart.

Both these great gatherings were constituted by duly nominated and appointed church representatives, supplemented by experts in the field of theology, economics, education, etc., and by representatives from youth groups and interdenominational organizations. Together they represented the greatest concentration of Christian thought and action in the history of the Church since the Reformation.

I wish to express here my gratitude to Miss Antonia H. Froendt for her invaluable help in making possible the publication of this book in so short a time.

Washington, D. C.,
End of November, 1937.

ADOLF KELLER.

CONTENTS

I

The Spiritual Aspects 11

II

The Background of the Present World 28

III

Facing the World's Promise of a New Order 37

IV

What Has the Church of Christ to Offer? 61

a. The Living Christ Rises Above the Conferences
b. The Wind Bloweth Where It Listeth (John 3: 8)
c. The Vision of a New Church

V

Five Minutes to Twelve 115

Bibliography 123

I

THE SPIRITUAL ASPECTS

THE World Conferences of Oxford and Edinburgh are over. After the symphony of such world gatherings a period of solitude and reflection is necessary for re-thinking the work of the conferences, bringing the harvest of this tremendous co-operation of Christian forces into the granaries of the churches, and finally to re-orientate ourselves, the participants, in the light of the conferences, amidst a world which seems dark and without hope.

A wealth of information has been piled up. A stupendous amount of theological thinking has been done. The reports of the various sections of both gatherings will long remain a real treasure house of fecund ideas, illuminating suggestions, critical observations, and far-reaching plans. Many resolutions proved the will of the conferences to show a way toward action. Frank discussion of our differences always seemed to encourage a new sincerity among churches and a new desire to speak the truth in love and to love one another in truth. A fellowship has

now been rendered possible which we hardly anticipated. Friendships have been formed which will last. A council, or some sort of comprehensive organization, is in the process of formation. It is hoped that this will open up a new avenue of influence for the Church on the world, which, after all, suffers under its own divisions quite as much as do the churches themselves under theirs.

Yet the final significance of these conferences will hardly depend on this wealth of information, on the theological clarification of traditional beliefs, on the resolutions and reports and new administrative units. The momentum of the conferences lies in the act of faith which made this work possible and in the joint spiritual experience which united us for future common faith and action. The result of the conferences therefore depends on the spiritual impulses which were received during those memorable gatherings, on the vision of faith which is pending before the Christian world, on the willingness to hold fast that which we have received in spiritual blessing, and to share it with those who remained at home; and first of all, of course, on God's continuing grace.

Reports, resolutions, and messages of the conferences are now available to the Christian world. It

may be hoped that a world-wide move to study them will be initiated in the form of study groups, courses at the theological faculties and seminaries, and elsewhere, so that the work begun by these great international meetings will continue in the local churches and parishes.

We do not plan to deal with this informational aspect of the conferences. It is subject to discussion and constructive criticism. It was a defect in the follow-up work after the Stockholm Conference of 1925 that insufficient consideration and time were given to such constructive criticism. The critical voices, therefore, instead of being raised *within* that conference, came from *without*, and accused the whole ecumenical movement of a too-facile optimism, of a too-shallow idealism and "activism" which did not seem to take seriously enough the underlying facts of sin and evil.

The conferences of this year have shown an earnest self-criticism, humility, a real despair of the powers of man, and hence more of looking to God as the only way out of the world crisis. On the whole, the European continent shows a more critical attitude than America and was more afraid of renewed self-deception and the illusion caused by an optimism

which tends to forget that the world is not so plastic as we, in our idealism, thought it was. This European criticism is directed largely at the human, theological, and ecclesiastical side of the conferences, with the all-too-human element (which is dangerously ubiquitous even in church conclaves!) with theological controversies and questions of organization and leadership. None the less, this criticism which is concerned with the psychology, the ethos, and the technique of the conferences, by no means ignored their spiritual aspect, and is very anxious lest the spiritual impulse be paralyzed in questions of organization and in ecclesiastical issues. This criticism of the human element in the conferences betrays no lack of interest or understanding but a great seriousness which is not content with superficial successes and shows a willingness to collaborate in a deeper sphere of Christian faith and life than in committee meetings and conferences.

The spiritual harvest of Oxford and Edinburgh, upon rigid self-examination, seems to be less doubtful than the gain in theological or ecclesiastical unity. In this common spiritual experience and fellowship there seems to be found more unity than in theological formulae, more power than in resolutions or programs

of action, more hope than in plans for new organizations.

Other books, such as those now being published by the administrative committees of the conferences and the Research Department in Geneva,[1] give a reliable survey of their work and fully describe them with all their achievements and vicissitudes. It is significant that church conferences should be thus projected, as it were, on the screen of public interest throughout the churches, so that millions of eyes reading these books, millions of ears hearing the reports, are orientated toward a historic event in Christian history. The focusing of world-wide Christian interest on those conferences has in itself a symbolic value, and shows that the ecumenical idea has been at least embedded in the heart of Christendom. And we need not exclude the Church of Rome in this connection, although it did not send a delegation. High Catholic dignitaries asked the writer of this book to assure the leaders of the ecumenical movement that the absence of the Roman Church should not be interpreted as an unfriendly act, and the Archbishop of Edinburgh, in a letter to the conference there, expressed his deep in-

[1] Cf. bibliography in the back of the book.

terest and friendly concern with the problems to be dealt with.

This book does not deal with the theological discussions nor does it enter into the controversial problems. It is confined in scope to the spiritual experience which was granted to the conferences as a gift of God and which is the real inner impulse for all future activity. We have to listen to and to answer this spiritual impulse because we feel the need of interpreting the conferences to our Church members and cannot do so by a mere description of what went on nor by a mere presentation of the problems which came before them.

The National Preaching Mission, started last year by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, gave special prominence to such spiritual interpretation of the conferences, and has therefore proved one of the best and most effective methods for bringing the harvest of the conferences right down to the local parishes. Those members of the Preaching Mission to whom this task was assigned soon felt that it was not enough to give their audiences a story of the conferences, a picture of their external characteristics, or even a survey of their work and leading concepts. The grave responsibility which is

laid on those who had the privilege of attending these meetings impelled them to give their hearers as much of the spiritual blessing received there as could be conveyed. It was necessary to translate the spiritual life and grace of those gatherings into the language of the denominational church; to make the transition from the mass psychology of a world council into the group-psychology of smaller audiences. May God grant that some of the spiritual splendor may be reflected on our faces, as it was on that of Moses when he descended from Sinai, and that the light of it may shine on the hungry and waiting multitudes at the foot of the sacred mountain on whose summit, in those rare hours of spiritual intercourse, we were privileged to live together in the Presence of God and in the sanctuary of a new Church!

Surely, this Presence is not limited to such historic events, to rare experiences, to huge church councils. It was actually necessary to be cautious and not confuse deep religious emotion of the kind that pervades multitudes, with the profound awe that takes hold of the sinner in the awful Presence of a merciful God. We were therefore not likely to forget, when we were carried off our feet by a storm of enthusiasm or a wave of deep emotion, that God's Presence is not felt

alone in thunderstorms, earthquakes, or fires, but also in the gentle and tender stirring of the Spirit which may be felt anywhere at any time. Not in noisy enthusiasm—Luther warned against it—but in that inner awareness of an inescapable confrontation with God which bids us listen, and hear Him.

Yet a collective experience differs from an individual experience. This collective experience has been lost for centuries to a large part of non-Roman Christianity. It returns today in the ecumenical movement which is an expression of the homesickness of those who belong together in their innermost relationship to God and to His Son.

The task of bringing back to the churches such a moving spiritual experience is a tremendous one and may well make those tremble who are undertaking it. They must feel like the man who is carrying in the hollow of his hands a little precious water to a thirsty wanderer who has fallen exhausted in the dust of the road. The better part of the life-giving fluid is lost between the fingers and only a few drops may be left for the sufferer. Yet a few drops may revive him!

But he who has been permitted to stand in the Presence of God in a great communion of brethren, gathered in the sanctuary of God's house, feel a holy

obligation to answer the divine call with an obedient, "Here I am! Send me forth!" We who are thus called upon to accomplish this task, in weakness, do so with the prayer that God may cleanse our lips.

Such moments of communion with God were for many of us the great and real events of the world gatherings at Oxford and Edinburgh, the spiritual experience which counts, which we could not prepare for nor anticipate, which came to us as a gift of God in a time of need. It was not as a reward for our efforts. It came in spite of us. It was not the finest and most sublime blossom of the Christian heart. It was an encounter with a world beyond. It was not a given fact, but a dynamic act of a Power which took possession of soul and will. It was so little in our possession, our acquired or accrued benefit and assured property, that it came one moment and left us the next. It wandered over our hearts like a benign cloud dropping rain on the thirsty ground, which for a moment drinks in the heavenly grace and in the next instant is abandoned because the cloud is wafted away and grants not a permanent, but a momentary blessing. We could not store up this grace for the following day by converting it into theological cognition, or lasting institutes, or continuing experience.

The divine manna is not given for the next day, but for this day alone, lest man forget the Giver because of the gift, and overlook the merciful and sovereign act of giving. We were therefore, both rich and poor, ever and ever again humbled and again elevated, alone with our wretchedness and again confronted with the mercy of God's Presence. We had hours of weakness, full of despair, animated by human aims and selfish aspirations. And then there were moments when we said with the Apostle Paul, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

This ebb and flow of the spiritual impulse showed us that we did not have God's grace in our power or handling. God remains sovereign over the experience which He allows us to have. It was well that the conferences were not swept away in a wave of universal enthusiasm. This would have been the real temptation of such a gathering. Besides the spiritual blessing which was granted to the conferences, we received the blessing of a critical faculty which ever and anon let us see ourselves, our human weaknesses and sins, in the light of the divine judgment. This critical vision of the Church and of the individual Christian was helpful and necessary. That which was human, all too human, even in Christian living, be-

came lamentably manifest. It would have been wrong to have covered it up with the mantle of Christian love. Individual ambitions magnified into denominational interests, theological grandiloquence compensating for spiritual deficiency, haste and zeal in thought and expression were remote from divine serenity, ecclesiastical dignity and formality sometimes being called upon to cover up a real neglect of the prophetic voice; emphasis laid on organization, betraying thus little confidence in the guidance of the Spirit, unpreparedness and immaturity in the face of a great opportunity—all these were present and might well be hurled as an indictment by the children of this world into the countenances of the children of light. There was sometimes a forgetfulness which ignores, but which God remembers. The sins of the churches marched before us a terrible army, and found us out.

We could not be permitted to speak of a great spiritual experience, of God's Presence, if we did not thus accuse ourselves before His face and repent. Such repentance is the condition of a spiritual experience. And the conferences were not spared such moments of deep humiliation when they had to confess that they were not yet ripe for that great act of common

worship which Christ had taught his disciples in the Holy Communion.

Yet, God sent His Son to be born in a manger, and incarnation means just that divine condescension which does not abhor the descent into human weakness and sin.

This was the miracle of the conferences: the paradoxical experience of God's children that He does not dwell in the seats of the mighty, but with those who have a broken and a contrite heart and live in fear of Him. Christ dwells among men who do not deserve his grace.

It is easy to bring back to the churches the wealth of thought and of suggestions, the theological subtleties which were discussed, the resolutions and programs for future action and organization. Surely, all this wealth of information will have to be digested and the constructive elements examined in our deliberations and planning. We shall have to rethink the Church and the State and their relations to one another. We must work out carefully those plans of reorganization and perhaps of a World Council of Churches without overestimating the organizing power of the mind working in the sphere of the Spirit, and without underestimating the educational and

symbolic value of a working organization. We shall have to re-educate our Church members to a wider vision and comprehension of the Church of Christ and must once again do pioneer work near a new frontier which separates, not churches from churches, but Christ's kingdom from that of Antichrist, Christian faith from pagan beliefs, the Kingdom of Heaven from the power of the world.

But this necessary spadework is hopeful only where the shower of heavenly grace has passed over the field, moistened the dry soil, and opened its thirsty pores to receive the Divine Blessing.

Let us not forget that the conferences are not only a new beginning, but also an end; and perhaps the end is more significant than the beginning, as we shall see later. The new effort which we made was a reaction to a new and mightier challenge from the world. It was sharper thinking, better preparation, closer co-operation, keener planning, a more energetic striving for clarity, decision, victory. But all this could be but another manifestation of that constructive idealism of which we shall speak subsequently. The Lord is perhaps nearer to those that lose than to them that win. We have drunk too often the wine of a new enthusiasm to feel the conviction that we are def-

initely entering the Kingdom on this earth whenever a new movement is started. It may be that what has come to an end is more revealing of God's will than our new starts in theology and organization. Therefore, even if we came home with empty hands, God may have accomplished great things.

He did: and this is the spiritual impulse under which we did our little bit of human work. He spoke, and to have heard again His Holy Word is our spiritual experience which transfigured our theological thinking, our drafting and planning. He called, and the urgency of His commandment, vivifying our faith in obedience, is the blessing we received. He met us in terrible confrontation—He, the Inescapable. No way out was left to us, not even that of flight into our own programs and resolutions. We were stripped. We were naked. We were poor, and this poverty was our plenitude, our "pleroma," because God has put an end to our beginnings and begun Himself.

Is such an experience communicable? Does experience not teach us that experience teaches nothing? Is a deep experience not what singles us out and separates us from the fellowship with others? It *can*. A spiritual experience produces isolation and creates

a prophet, who is the loneliest man on earth. Or it produces communion and creates a "Church," which is the mystery of real fellowship in the Spirit. At any rate, a spiritual experience cannot be deduced, cannot be taught, cannot be expounded in a program. It has its loneliness, its strangeness in a world of hard facts. We cannot prove it, nor bring it into a system. All that we can do is to bear witness to its nature and force and superhuman origin. The Church of Christ needs a theology. Certainly, because she cannot live without truth. She needs the fellowship of love, because love alone makes the truth bearable. She needs works of charity, because where Christ is, there are brethren. She needs organization, because she is an organ, growing and vital, and not simply a tool or an instrument. But she needs most of all witness, the simple, unobtrusive, persuasive witness of Christians who confess: We met God on our way; we saw Christ. Such witness does not argue, but convinces. It does not proselytize, but it creates fellowship. It sounds as the voice of man and yet can be the call of the Living God.

Such witness is offered here. It is not the witness of one individual. It is a collective testimony. The representatives of the churches were far from being

unanimous in their theological convictions or in their ecclesiastical reports. They were critical, skeptical, dubious in regard to the human work of the conferences. They did not believe that the "best thinkers" did necessarily the best work, nor that nominating committees were delegates of the Holy Ghost, nor that a brilliant formula was *eo ipso* a divine truth. Yet they confessed: God's work is being done here. God's Presence is felt. *Deus lo volt.* What was it?

Before we can try to answer this question, we have to locate the conferences in the present world. They were not a sudden explosion of Christian thought and energy. They reflect the state of the world and the present condition of the churches in this world. They were not isolated from the needs of the world, from the sufferings of the churches, from the faith living in the various communions, from the spiritual experience of millions of Christians, from the dangers and temptations through which they had to pass. The conferences were therefore a mirror held up to the world as it is, or a sounding board echoing the turmoil of the present world situation.

The World was present, in the midst of a church conference. It came with its propositions, its political and social programs. We had to confront them

with the eternal truth for which the Church has always stood, and with some forgotten truths which were brought to light afresh by the events of the present, from that treasure house of living and forgotten truths which is the Bible.

II

THE BACKGROUND OF THE PRESENT WORLD

We live in a strange and dangerous world; a world so dangerous that Mr. Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, warned us recently to watch our very words lest their echoes, as in the Swiss Alps, awaken an avalanche which might plunge down the mountain to leap like a panther upon the peaceful villages and towns beneath! Once again, we must live dangerously. An old world is disintegrating and we do not know whether this means a definite end or a liberation of the elements of this world, enabling them to aggregate afresh and crystallize into a new and better world.

What we can see with certainty is the end of institutions, values, and formulae of an economic and social system; of ideals and ideas which we cherished and for which we stood. A rift appears to be cleaving our whole civilization and we cannot foresee whether or not this rift will not penetrate our own churches, our lives, and our hearts. Institutions which seemed

to be of granite are crumbling like dust and convictions which seemed to be founded on eternal truth can no longer resist the destructive test of time.

Should this end of a civilization, of political, social, and intellectual systems, of age-long thought-habits, this end of an ancient world, frighten us? The Christian Church was never afraid of the end of things. Her message speaks again and again of the end of the world. This was at times a forgotten truth. But many forgotten truths are re-emerging today. This emergence of the truth may indeed be terrible. The Swiss philosopher Vinet said: "*Ce qu'il y a de terrible lorsqu'on cherche la vérité—c'est qu'on la trouve.*" (What is so terrible when one seeks truth is that one finds it!) We are rediscovering the forgotten truths of the Bible. They stare us in the face and we have to endure their gaze.

We had forgotten that the Bible does *NOT* speak of a world which would grow better and better, day by day, in an eternal process of evolution, but rather of a Judgment Day which would bring the world to an end. We took our civilization for granted and did not listen to the ominous trampling of the hoofs of the Apocalyptic steeds which cause the earth to tremble in fear and in despair.

We forgot that, according to the Bible, the world is "not such stuff as dreams are made of." It is not simply a plastic element which we can mold with our hands or our will. The present hopeless chaos teaches us again that the world is not so malleable as our optimism led us to think, but is a transient abode where we must suffer the "crafts and assaults of the Devil" and are tempted to resist the will of the Creator. The Bible has a truer, more profound and more complete knowledge of the nature of the world than science, which gives us only one aspect of it. The world, as we think we see it in our "objective" curiosity, is a world without God. We forget that the resistance against God, the revolt against His will, is an inherent quality of this world. The Bible knows it and reckons, not with an autonomous cosmos, but with a world which fell out of God's hand and will, in rebellion and sin, and must be reconquered and recreated by His redeeming grace. The God who has been abandoned and forgotten by the world becomes its evil conscience, and we are reminded, even in our conscious or unconscious revolt, in our exaggerated desire for liberty, that we are struggling, like Paul, against an unknown enemy who is our master.

We had forgotten that man is not only an atom in

the world of matter, but a prey to evil spirits if he neglects that protection which the Holy Spirit alone can give. Science in the last century had reduced the world to matter and to a series of mechanistic processes. Psychology is reducing man to a bundle of instincts, to a conscious or subconscious system of actions and reactions. The former "principalities and powers" of which Christ and Paul spoke were reduced to harmless complexes, to will-o'-the-wisps wandering in the night of our unconscious or subconscious mind. The forgotten demons whom we had driven from the field of modern civilization came back and re-entered our houses by side doors and back entries. Hence we live no longer in an objective world cleansed of superstition and dubious mystical relics—a world of law and order, carefully sterilized against all germs of the Unknown. This comfortable modern world has been repopulated by demons and spirits who are none the less harmful if we give them harmless names and speak of them as complexes, neuroses, phobias, and obsessions. A walk through a lunatic asylum shows us that such spirits are there, not only in the imagination of the sick, but as a psychological reality; not only as a problem of psychological pathology, but, labeled by modern nomenclature, as

"revenants" in the spacious "no man's land" extending in the modern mind between the normal and the abnormal.

Modern experience has rehabilitated these forgotten truths of the Bible. It shows us every day that the present world is nearing an end. We need not necessarily think of an ultimate catastrophe such as the hell-fire-and-brimstone preachers of an earlier day described to the frightened minds of trappers and farmers in the wilderness. The end can come in many forms, even in disguise, even as a new beginning. The world is emptying invisibly—like a leaky cask. Its wealth and fullness are illusion. It loses substance every day. Its fullness is in reality emptiness because the values which count, which give weight and depth and gravity, the moral values, faith in God—these are evaporating.

A world which no longer has a religious significance has come to an end. It comes to an end when it loses that significance. The day of the Last Judgment has innumerable forerunners. Again and again an invisible voice declares that something is doomed. This doom has emptied the once glorious world of bourgeois liberalism, the shallow evolutionism of pseudo-science, of democracy as well as of ancient feudalism.

Idealism as well as materialism have become mere words and abstractions. We are left holding the empty vessels in our hands and place them in the curiosity shop of human illusions. The atrophy which follows so many idealistic conceptions and visions of mankind is a terrifying corroboration of the forgotten truths of the Bible: that the world has an end and is ever falling like a sinister cascade from chasm to chasm, to deeper and more final ends, into the abyss of uncertainty and despair.

The helplessness of mankind is a striking contradiction to the idealistic assumption that we can easily mold the world with our hands and our will. This world is not clay, but granite—nay, harder! Our chisels and hammers break on the inconceivably resistant material which we are trying to shape. It is far less plastic than we thought in our "constructive idealism." Our economists hoped to organize a planned or manipulated economic system. Their tremendous effort to rationalize the irrational processes of hunger, greed, voluptuousness; of the forces of nature—heat, cold, storm, blizzard, flood, drought, and frost; of the irrational will-to-power, of the exaggerated profit motive—all has hitherto failed. Certainly we would not deny the slow, majestic progress of ideas. But we

LIBRARY
World Council of Churches
150, route de Ferney, GENEVA

cannot wait, and the rhythm of our hunger for and love of life is faster than the rhythm of history. The impatience of the individual and of the nations cannot wait until life, in an automatic process or in its unconscious wisdom, will have accomplished that plenitude which may lie hidden in its impulses. We are hungry. We are dying. The mortal protests against the deathless infinity of history. We want to live, now and here.

We are therefore deeply disappointed with the self-assured engineers of life who promised us food, happiness, order, peace, and prosperity.

The statesmen and politicians were no luckier than the men of science. We accuse no one. We are still in the same darkness, groping our way in a murky catacomb toward an unknown exit. We are hitting our heads against unseen walls and we realize the limits of human power. The pioneer psychology is passing, at least so far as Europe is concerned. We are confronted with barriers which seem invincible and definitive. The discovery of a certain impotence of the spirit threatens to discourage us and so lures us into the temptation to dethrone the Spirit as master-builder of life and history. In Germany this has been done quite often. Philosophers like Bergson and

Scheler mistrust that constructive capacity of the human mind which celebrated a veritable intellectual orgy in the era of German idealism. Ludwig Klages accuses the Spirit of being the real traitor to life. The downfall of our optimistic idealism shows that we are not only a "society with limited liability," but with limited means, faculties, and powers. The end of that idealism is the beginning of a new humility in mankind which knows, better than it formerly did, where its limitations are. The Bible always knew them and we would have been spared many costly mistakes if we had listened to its wisdom.

A new and sinister personalism is becoming a characteristic feature of our public and private life and corroborates again the vision described in the Bible of a demonic world surrounding us. It is as if ghosts, lemures, and demons should materialize as terrifying apparitions in the psychology of nations, in the cabinets of governments, in the mass psychology of parliaments and political groups, and in the general relationships of mankind. Things happen which could hardly have been planned by men; they bear the mark of a sinister and demonic intelligence, of satanic cunning. Demons are conquering the territory formerly occupied by reason, intellect, and morality. We

feel their disintegrating influence like that of a personal, divisive power in the conflicts between peoples or between man and wife; in race wars; in the tension between the generations; in the opposites which emanate from the subconscious mind. It is a personalism from out of the depths which here comes to light; a dark and demonic world which has made an incursion into human life. And these powers seem to pursue hidden aims and ends, to manifest themselves willfully and emotionally, and so palpably to annul the shape and image of personal tendencies and beings that it is difficult not to believe the Bible when it speaks of the Prince of this world and of the sinister host of principalities and powers with which we have got to battle. Those who live in the borderland of normalcy see ghosts stalking through the haunted houses which have been abandoned by their legitimate owners and no longer ridicule the reality of a demonic empire even if its geography, psychology, and morphology defy description and definition. One does not need to be a spiritualist today to admit the reality and efficacy of dark and evil powers which we have to face in our present appalling situation. The ghosts whom Jesus permitted to enter the swine of the Gadarenes seem to be looking for new lodgings today!

III

FACING THE WORLD'S PROMISE OF A NEW ORDER

In such a condition of fear and despair we look around for help and the promise of a solution. Three great world powers are promising us salvation, a new world order, and reconstruction on the basis of peace and mutual co-operation: Communism, Fascism, and that constructive idealism of which the League of Nations may be called the most conspicuous exponent. These world powers were present, lived, and worked at the conference of Oxford. Our reaction against them was a part of our thinking and of our spiritual experience. We therefore had to confront them with the Christian message.

1. *Can Communism satisfy the spiritual needs of mankind?*

We are not speaking here of Communism as an economic or sociological doctrine. What Communism has to say in regard to the economic forces, their laws, their effects on the life and soul of man, the

struggle of the proletariat for their rights and liberties, may remain open for discussion and study.

Nor do we doubt that Communism has rooted in many noble hearts a profound desire for social justice, for the abolition of the manifold injustices of a society based on class distinctions, and the aspiration toward a classless society which would permit the realization of brotherhood of man impossible under the present capitalistic system. We shall not forget that the first Christian century made (at first) an attempt to live as a communistic society although this experiment soon came to an end.

Nor would we finally deny that the religious meaning of Communism may be found in a judgment on a Christian society which forgot to apply its constitutive principle to the realities of living. It may well be the scourge which the apocalyptic avenging angel wields over a church which claims the fatherhood of God without the brotherhood of man. Communism would thus have a meaning similar to that which the Assyrian or Babylonian conquerors had for the children of Israel. The wrath of God may have fallen upon us; and as we are unwilling and unable to build up a fellowship of brethren by the power of love, it may be that God in His wrath bids the

very powers that oppose Him to build it up in the name and with the power of their revenge and hatred. If God laid His hand upon them, it would matter little whether they were sent as builders or as destroyers. God may, as Luther said, destroy when He creates and let loose His wrath when He is preparing His way for His love. But God as destroyer is a dark and mysterious chapter—this is the Unknown God of whom Luther was afraid. Since we know Christ, we believe in God as Creator and Redeemer.

Nor would we hesitate to recognize that Communism in Russia must be credited with a successful effort to improve the economic situation of the workers, to deliver a whole people from the slavery of a rotten Czarist system with which the Church was only too closely connected, to lift a whole nation to a higher educational level, to introduce modern hygiene into the life of a vast population of modern technique and civilization and to fill their souls and hearts with new hope and confidence in a national future. It must be said that young Bolshevists often show more real enthusiasm for their life-ideal, more surrender of self, and more willingness to make sacrifices than the adherents of the Christian Church do for theirs.

When all this has been freely admitted, then, and then only, have we the right to ask: Can we accept this promise of a new world order, this message of a new Messianism, as that salvation of mankind for which we hope? In trying to measure a man or a group or a movement, Christians will always ask two questions: What is their faith? and how is this faith put into practice? Faith and obedience are the infallible barometers of the intrinsic value of men and movements. The ultimate values for which men stand are a revelation of their inmost nature. We have all the more the right to put this question since Bolshevism is not simply a political or social system or an economic theory, but a belief; Berdyaev even says it is a religion. He considers Bolshevism as the monstrous child born out of wedlock to Marxism and the deep religious mysticism of the Russian people. We are therefore entitled to ask: What do they really and ultimately believe?

It is not hard to find this out, since Bolshevism is a kind of mimicry of the Christian religion. It has its Messiah, its creed, its ritual symbols, its disciples, its martyrs, its last judgment—not on a sinful humanity but on a specific class—the universalism of the Christian world mission. When we try to dis-

cover the religious values or pseudo-values of Bolshevism, we must not consult the official constitution, but the party program, the resolutions of the Bolshevist and Communist conferences, the writings and sayings of their official and acknowledged leaders, the decrees of their committees; because the party is not only the spinal cord of the State, but contains its philosophy and has worked out its mythos.[1]

In so far as Bolshevism is a rebirth of the original revolutionary Marxism, its fundamental doctrines are not only a specific interpretation of the relation between Capital and Labor, the theory of a classless society, and the acceptance of class war as the means for its realization. Behind these economic and sociological doctrines lies an ideology or a belief of a metaphysical character. It is the historic materialism which denies the existence and the task of the Spirit and declares spirit as mere "epiphenomenon" —an annex and manifestation of matter. "Man is what he eats," is a well-known extremist formula for this materialism and biologism which are basic for the Communist conception of the world and man's place in it.

[1] A description of these ideological elements of Bolshevism has been given in a former book by the author, *Church and State on the European Continent.*

It is in fact inconsistent with such a materialistic doctrine if the Bolshevist believes in science, technics, and in the ideal of a classless human society. In the last analysis this is a belief in man, in the creative power of his mind and will. It is humanism in its crudest form. It is a man-made religion without a God. It is a Messianism without a Messiah. It is a belief without a vision of the Invisible. It is a last judgment without justice. It is a coming kingdom without a king.

Nowhere is it more manifest than at this point that the human life-ideal depends on one's faith in what is above man. Because the Bolshevist creed does not believe in an eternal value of life, human life is not respected. Life is cheap in Russia. Let them starve! Let them be shot or hanged if they do not fit into the System! The Archbishop of Canterbury estimated according to reliable sources that at least five million people had to pay with their lives for the tremendous economic and political experiment of Bolshevism. Thousands were shot, banished, or died silently in the concentration camps near the White Sea or in the Siberian forests, forgotten by the world, unheard, despairing—a frightful hecatomb of hu-

man lives as an offering for a technical, social, and educational "improvement."

But is this price not worth while, is it not a vicarious sacrifice? Should not five or ten millions die that 170,000,000 might live? The answer is: What does a life of technical progress mean if there is no liberty? "Give me liberty or give me death!" said Patrick Henry, and thus expressed one of the deepest life-conditionings of every man who knows. What does it profit a man if he should win the whole world and lose his own soul? What is a fraternity without love? What is man without a soul? A conception of man which does not show an instinctive respect for life, a recognition of the soul, an appreciation of spiritual and religious liberty, is sub-human and certainly sub-Christian. It is a life-theory which teaches that man lives on bread alone. We may admire the technical miracles, recognize the progress in education and administration—this is not the atmosphere in which Christians can breathe with their unquenchable desire for liberty, for invisible values, and their faith in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. We cannot sacrifice Christ for the benefits of a pagan secularistic civilization. Communism, as we know it,

cannot be for us the solution of our world problem. We cannot believe in the gospel of this salvation!

The spiritual experiences of the past centuries, as well as our knowledge of truth, protest against this man-made gospel of salvation by economic alterations. The conference of Oxford gave it a place in the life and work of the conference; Bolshevism is the accuser, the *advocatus diaboli,* the terrible reminder of what the Gospel really is, and what we have made of it. It ridicules a spiritual experience of Christ and his gospel, which forgets that Christ did not remain in heaven, but descended on this earth in order to help mankind.

2. *Can Fascism be the world's salvation?*

The question as to whether Fascism is a better political system than democracy does not concern us here. Our long-established democracies are far from guaranteeing that everything they do comes of the people and is done for the people and by the people. The French statesman Tardieu speaks quite bluntly of the "lie of democracy." It seems that everything which human beings touch or human minds invent—and be it the noblest ideal—becomes tainted by sin. Democracy, a high ideal of mankind, has turned into one of its saddest tragedies.

We should therefore not hesitate to admit that Fascism, in either its Italian or its German form, has certain advantages which democracy has not. It has accomplished the miracle of lifting an entire nation out of an abyss of despair, self-contempt, and hopelessness. It has laid an iron ring of order around the disintegrating and anarchic trends of a chaotic society. It has erected a dam against the flood of disorder and killing which threatened town and country alike after the war. In justice to what is, after all, a human effort to improve human life, these things must be said to its credit, even as we tried to evaluate the good points in Communism.

But here again we must test these benefits in the light of that ultimate question: In what ultimate values do you believe? And in what spirit is this faith applied to life?

The supreme value for Fascism is the State. It has a mystical value. If the medieval Church pretended that outside the Church there is no salvation, the fascist variant of this axiom would be: Outside of the State there is no salvation.

The supreme value for the National-Socialist creed is the Nation. Outside the nation of pure Germanic blood there is no salvation for an inhabitant of Ger-

many. The highest values of a race and of a people are hidden here, in the mystical secret of "good blood." Neither Fascism nor National-Socialism would deny that the State as well as the Nation are God's creations. On the contrary, they stress the divine character of the creative forces in nature and history to such an extent that the theological background of these state ideologies is a theology of Creation, a theology of the divine orders of State and Nation.

The Christian Church of course also stands for a theology of creation, and belief in God as a Creator-God. But this is not sufficient to our Christian faith. It is not specifically Christian. All religions believe in a divine creation of the world, pagan as well as Christian. A specific Christian theology tells of a fallen creation, of a world tainted with sin, and therefore in need of redemption. There can be no Christian Church without faith in a merciful God who forgives sin and sends us His message of redemption and salvation through Jesus Christ. A divine spark in the human soul, as Rosenberg calls it, cannot save us; we need Christ, the Son of God, as our Saviour and Lord.

The Christian faith cannot so overestimate the

State as to admit its totalitarian claim on the innermost areas of mankind: its soul, its faith, its Christian conscience. They are exempt from the jurisdiction of the State and are subject to God alone, the sole Sovereign of human life. Where these inner provinces of the soul are threatened by subjection under the iron rule of an omnipotent State, the concept of an omnipotent God loses ground in the soul, and where God's authority is weakened, human liberty loses its real foundation.

Not only liberty is lost, but moral values in general. The principle, "Right or wrong—my country," is anti-Christian. And to define goodness by what is profitable to a nation, is sub-Christian. National egotism, from a moral point of view, is no better than personal egotism. The so-called "strong" virtues, the masculine or heroic virtues—force, courage, honor, discipline, will-to-power—are barbarian and not Christian virtues. Christianity has long ago discovered that strength and greatness lie paradoxically, in the so-called "weak" virtues: humility, sacrifice, self-surrender, love. The Christian faith can endure a regime of outward power and force, but it cannot espouse an ideology which imposes on the soul a supreme principle other than God alone, and a life ideal

other than that expressed in the discipleship of Christ.

Fascism in its various forms may therefore be a new political principle and an easy method of unifying conflicting social interests. It can never become, in its ideological content, a religious or a moral principle which can satisfy the Christian heart and conscience. A nation may adopt such a theological-political system: part of a Christian nation may even find an easy compromise with such a form of national religion. But there can be no doubt that this promise of peace by force, of philosophy *par ordre de mufti,* of world fellowship by exclusion, of ethics for national profit, will not bring a solution of our present world problems.

For our spiritual experience at Oxford, this proposed solution seemed to be that temptation which religion has always meant for the Christian faith in revelation—religion understood as the natural religious tendency in human nature to glorify creation. A specific Christian experience is not simply a general religious experience. Was Tertullian a true exponent of Christian experience when he spoke of the *anima naturaliter Christiana,* of the soul which by its very nature is Christian? Should he not rather have

spoken of the *anima naturaliter religiosa,* of the soul whose nature is religious?

3. *What has constructive idealism to offer?*

A third world solution is offered to us by that constructive idealism of which the League of Nations may be considered an outstanding example. Idealism in this sense is of course not a mere vague enthusiasm, but a philosophy of life, a constructive political and social effort to transform life by ideas. It is an old and noble attempt of the human mind to begin to do right by thinking right. The belief in the Spirit as a guiding power has its roots here. Start with an idea, and try to make it incarnate in the flesh and blood of human reality. Human history, to this idealism, becomes a continuation of that Divine Incarnation by which the *Logos* became flesh.

> "Sow an idea—you reap an act;
> Sow an act—you reap a habit;
> Sow a habit—you reap a character;
> Sow a character—you reap a destiny."

Nobody will overlook the psychological and educational truth which lies in this doctrine.

And yet: have we not put too much trust in the world-transforming power of such idealism? Has the idea or the ideal an inherent power, an immanent

energy which may become an "idée-force" as the French say? Does it exert a seductive influence or such persuasive power that it has a quasi-natural tendency to become concrete reality? We are far away, today, from this Socratic optimism. We have learned more from Paul than from Socrates when the former says: "When I would do good, evil is present with me." Our ancient idealism in these days faces a very blunt skepticism. The German philosopher Scheler complains openly of the so-called "impotence of the spirit." And another philosopher (Klages) pours contempt on the claim of the spirit to be able to transform reality. According to Klages, life itself contains not only a concealed wisdom, but an immanent dynamic element which tends toward realization. "Let us therefore follow rather the obscure and unconscious wisdom of life than the doubtful illumination of the mind, of ideas!" he counsels. Nietzsche likewise ridicules that lofty idealism and replaces it by the principle of the *Wille zur Macht*. And the French sociologist, George Sorel, despairing of the power of the mind, preaches force. It is well known that Mussolini admits being his disciple.

But do not our own practical experiences with that idealism impose on us a far greater skepticism than

we ever felt before? We look back on all the idealistic attempts of Christianity in the last decades and on the small practical results which they have brought.

Why did America enter the War? To make the world safe for democracy. That is political idealism. What is democracy today? A lie, say Hitler and Tardieu.

What has become of the idealistic pacifist movements? Drowned in universal rearmament?

What about the "Social Gospel"? Did it go very much farther than to declarations of principles and social creeds? The Prohibition Movement was one of the most gigantic idealistic enterprises, born out of an immense trust in a great idea, in the world-transforming power of good will and moral effort. The failure of this movement is the failure of a constructive idealism which forgot the demonic reality of Evil and the limits which are imposed on human good will. The tragedy of this downfall is an unforgettable lesson to avoid the easy optimism which invites us to make a "final effort" to break the power of the Lord of the World, and accelerate the coming of the Kingdom of God. We can no longer share the optimism of that impatient idealism which gave out the slogan, "Evangelization of the world in this

generation!" When this idealism came to an end, the forgotten truth of the Bible, the eschatological message of the end of the world, was once more heard. A new Christian realism was born which is not seduced by the Fata Morgana of human desire-images, but admits the reality of sin, of satanic forces of evil, the weakness and corruption of human nature, the mystery of God's will.

Constructive idealism offered a solution of international problems in the League of Nations. It was not precisely an "American Dream," although President Wilson founded it. It is an old and magnificent idea of mankind. When idealistic philosophers began to construct a new world in their thoughts (and this is the effort of Plato and Augustine, as well as of Leibnitz or Kant), they imagined an ideal human society, based on peace, mutual good will, and cooperation. The League of Nations has an unwritten history in the heart and imagination of mankind. Many of us saw the new Palace of the League rise slowly out of a green and peaceful park, surrounded by cedars of Lebanon, reflecting its white façade in the blue waters of Lake Leman, and greeting the distant towering peak of Mont Blanc, as the earthly symbol of a divine commandment: "Excelsior!" The

Palace seemed to us a castle of security, a vision of peace, in an insecure and battle-torn world. Why does it seem so empty now? Its archives and secretariat are filled with unique data on the situation of the present-day world. Here the political forces of the earth are described, catalogued, examined as to their nature and efficiency. In the wonderful library given by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., a mine of information is open to students from all countries. The International Labor Office, a creation of the League, has heaped up unimaginable treasures of knowledge concerning economic facts and labor conditions. A wave of the hand, and you can find what a coolie in China earns per day, or a miner in the copper works of South Africa. At a glance the social legislation of the Old World may be compared with that of the New. If a knowledge of facts sufficed to build up a new and better society, it could be done at Geneva. A staff of hundreds of the world's best brains is at hand to assemble these political, economic, and social statistics, to interpret them and combine them in all possible syntheses. An army of experts, a general staff of scholars, are at the disposal of the League, and a network of communications connects them with all the chancelleries of the great and the small nations.

The leadership which gathered these treasures of information and constructed this huge piece of machinery was first-rate.

Everyone who attended one of the first great assemblies of the League was impressed by a vision of a fellowship of nations. The hundreds of thousands of visitors who came to see the League in session looked down on an assembly of responsible statesmen who were expected to discuss and find peaceful solutions for international conflicts which hitherto had led to bloody wars. There sat France and Germany, peacefully side by side, as if no World War had ever come between them. Yonder benchful of gentlemen negligently leaning back: That is Great Britain! Here are Russia, Turkey, Italy, China, India, Japan, and Egypt. The minor States which have smaller armies and fewer guns and warships are not compelled to speak in humbly lowered voices. Here the spoken word is free to exercise the whole power of fascination which God gave to Reason, or Will, or Temperament, or Gentleness. No one can forget the magic of persuasion and enthusiasm which Briand possessed when he rose and the timbre of his melodic voice began to ring through the great hall. Or the noble and peaceful duel which Count Apponyi, a nobleman

from top to toe, so often fought with Titulescu, or the passionate and philosophic plea for international justice which Stresemann or Bruning made. Or the charm with which Eden or Madariaga played political tennis. Often enough the assembly has rung with great and historic words, expressing the noblest and highest aspirations of mankind. Statesmen, historians, philosophers, and poets competed in seeking the brilliant formula for resolving world conflict, in evolving the inescapable conclusions from deep and powerful thought, in giving the world a vision of the highest effort for peace and good will which human idealism has ever made. The Council of the League represented, not so much the knowledge heaped up in the secretariat, nor the enthusiasm which so often swept over the assembly, but added an invaluable element of wisdom and caution to the driving forces of Reason and Enthusiasm so that the political fellowship of the League seemed to be provided with all the highest intellectual forces which are necessary to stimulate action and to keep it in poise.

Innumerable conferences and committees are always in session in the busy halls of the white palace which seems a very Areopagus of wise and learned men, scholars, writers, and artists, crowning in their

activities and intellectual co-operation this idealistic effort of the human race.

The International Court of Justice at The Hague tries to embody the fundamental and first condition of international co-operation for peace: justice.

It would be ungrateful not to recognize that all these efforts were by no means in vain. In fact, the League has accomplished more than the world really knows and acknowledges.

Yet the actual failure of the League is too manifest not to make us think hard. The idea of the League stands unassailable. To paraphrase Voltaire: "If it had not already been invented, we should have to invent it." It is worth while to examine the causes of the evident defects and ineffectiveness of the League. Its weakness certainly does not lie in the basic idea, but rather in the complication of the machinery: for instance, in the handling of a minority problem, and still more in incompleteness of organization. The fact that the United States did not enter the League, after having called it into being, did more to hamper its efficiency than any other shortcomings. But the deepest roots of its weakness must be sought not so much in the field of political considerations as in moral and spiritual conditions. President Wilson

embedded a great and good idea in an evil treaty: Versailles. The spirit of that treaty spells revenge, not peace. Its articles were the sowing of dragons' teeth. Its results were destructive, not constructive. It destroyed confidence and hope, good will and justice. The Treaty of Versailles, by destroying the democratic hopes in Germany, made Hitler possible, even inevitable. Modern Fascism and Communism are the revenge for a neglected opportunity to serve mankind: the present war spirit is the penalty for the war spirit which was not banished from the peace treaty. Never was the German saying more true: "*Welt-Geschichte ist Welt-Gericht!*" (History is the verdict of world events.) World history since Versailles is a judgment not only on the sin, but on the foolishness of a policy of hatred and revenge.

This is manifest today in the upheaval of an entire world. Beside this crime of Versailles, the illusion born of Versailles becomes no less evident. It is the self-deception of a constructive idealism which believed that the world is a plastic element which can easily be molded by our hands and ideas. A great idea does not suffice to solve the biggest problem of the world. Machinery is not enough in the fight with the demons of this world, nor is an organization. It

needs the Spirit of God, the Creator, the Judge, the Redeemer of the world. One cannot run an international league in a nationalistic spirit. The nations were not yet mature enough for a great idea; or rather, their leaders were not. The peoples themselves were, naïvely enough, prepared to believe in a new start, to espouse the new idealism, to trust in the world-transforming power of an idea. The statesmen and politicians, the diplomats and generals who attended the Disarmament Conference, for instance, were much less capable of admitting this idealism than were the peoples they represented. This political ideal became in their hands an instrument in their game of nationalistic and personal ambitions and the "sacred egotism" of the Modern State.

Philosophical idealism—a whole world constructed on the windy basis of ideas—had already suffered defeat a hundred years before, when the world proved to be a hard reality of solid facts which could not be mastered by the intellectual architects of a logical and idealistic universe. This time, political idealism suffered defeat because the world proved to be not merely concrete and realistic, but demonic, infected through and through by evil forces. We learned in these last years of horror who is the real Prince of this

world. It is not the Spirit, as idealism believed. The cultural catastrophe may therefore rightly be called the tragedy of the Spirit. The world no longer appears to us as a direct manifestation of God, as idealism often taught. We understand now why Marcion, the heretic theologian of the second century, made not God responsible for this evil world, but a demiurge, an evil creator-spirit with sufficient creative power but insufficient wisdom and kindness—a theory which has come very near again to modern disillusioned man, not only to poets like H. G. Wells in his *God, the Invisible King,* but even to Christian theologians like Wilfred Monod, in Paris, who is haunted by the same problem in his *magnum opus, Le Problème du Bien* ("The Problem of Goodness").

This idealism has come to an end today in its philosophical and Christian form. The world itself has taught us a new realism which no longer allows us to retain that optimistic confidence in good ideas and lofty ideals we breed ourselves, nor in the efficiency of simple good will in a world in which the Devil is loose. We have discovered once more the tremendous reality of evil and sin and have been deeply humiliated through our idealistic enterprises in which this reality was forgotten.

It has become obvious in the agony of this lofty and optimistic idealism that the world cannot solve even its own wordly problems by its wordly methods. Neither Bolshevism, nor Fascism, nor Constructive Idealism can show us the way out of the present world chaos nor offer us a solution which is acceptable to the Christian faith and heart.

"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life!" This exclamation was the answer of our Christian faith, the answer of a whole world conference of churches to the secularistic effort and promise to build up a new world order. It was a tremendous stimulus to our spiritual experience to be thus confronted with the present promises of the World, and to see that God, the transcendent God revealed in Jesus Christ, is not in this political fire, this social earthquake, or this idealistic tempest, which is sweeping over the world. We were thrown back by it on that message in the Bible, the "still small Voice" which creates a spiritual experience that does not abdicate at the command of the present World Powers.

IV

WHAT HAS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST TO OFFER?

The world's answer to the terrible question of the Sphinx and its provision for a new world order leaves us in despair.

Has the Church of Christ an answer? The answer cannot be a mere theological system, a new or old dogmatic formula, a new school of thought! It cannot be simply a new and better organization or more efficient administration of the world's business. We should not be satisfied with a greater degree of efficiency on the part of the administrative machine in politics and economics or with a better calculation of its practical needs and the technical possibilities with which to meet them. Nor can it be simply a better and wiser leadership, an elite of personalities, of the best thinkers or the leading heroes, who would then do our thinking for us. The Christian spirit has reached a maturity in which it is not satisfied with less than a spiritual experience, a higher wisdom, a deeper love, a new inspiration. Nothing can help us

except a new Pentecost, a descent of the Holy Spirit, fire and light from heaven.

The conferences would not have had the temerity to say, Here it is! or, There it is—in this or that human aim or Christian movement or Church conference. God is manifest in Christ and in most cases obscure and hidden even in what we call Christian manifestations. The Kingdom of God does not come with outward gestures or human efforts. The conferences no longer confound the Kingdom of God with our Christian desire-image, idealistic imaginations, and Christian enterprises.

Yet this profound respect for God's transcendence, for this Mystery which cannot be measured even by a Christian mind, need not make us blind to the witness of His Presence, if it please God to let us have a peep—under the guidance of His Word and Spirit—into His secrets; if He allow us to watch His creative hands, to feel the silent stirring of His Spirit in the human heart. We should have sinned against the Holy Spirit if we had not thankfully accepted such tokens of His Grace. God may often be hidden or obscured to our weak eyes, yet God is a Presence unto our faith, not an absence. There are moments when we cry for a word from God, and complain that He

hides His face from us. There are other times when we feel confronted with His holy Word and hear His searching question, "Who will be my messenger?" These moments are terrible and sacred when a holy voice summons us: "Rise, and meet thy God!" There may be still other hours when we confess with Jacob, "Truly, God was here, with me, near me, and I did not know it."

The presence of God, of His Holy Spirit, cannot be measured or tested by external signs. We can never be spectators when we are really confronted with God. We have ever before us an objective and concrete reality which bears the visible marks of this presence. Yet our hearts know where God's word reaches us, strikes us down, or lifts us up before His face. Such a confrontation has not an objective but an inner testimony: "Silence! God speaks! Christ knocks at the door! The Holy Spirit breathes upon you!" The inward testimony of such an action of God on human hearts is not so much a mystic enthusiasm, but the certainty that we are confronted with God's terrible and merciful majesty, that we cannot avoid His will, that we are called upon personally and responsibly, that our human "I" stands annihilated and yet uplifted before the inescapable divine "Thou." A real

and decisive encounter with God occurs then when all other avenues are closed and no other way is open than that to God alone. Not impertinent mystical identification with the Divine, not an illusory enthusiasm, not a facile and exuberant optimism are the marks of such an encounter; but deepest humiliation, prostration of the sinner, whose lips are unclean, before the Divine Majesty, and then, in the midst of such agony, the merciful voice: "Thou art Mine! I have redeemed thee. Hear! Go! Do!" The conferences passed through such great moments in Christian life when God's Holy Word became direct and personal, when the Scripture became the living Word of God to sinful man, when the lightning of His presence in His words struck fire in our hearts and enkindled the flame of decision.

Mere theological formulae or resolutions by committees would not be as the sound of drums, making us march, willy-nilly. Nor would the enthusiasm and the mass psychology of large meetings. Even the wonderful gifts of warm fellowship would lack that power over souls which only the Holy Ghost can give.

But the Holy Ghost is no "datum." If we speak of a spiritual experience, it is hardly ever a pure seed

cleansed of all weeds or a holy process of the soul which is a foretaste of our heavenly existence. Our spiritual experiences are embedded in worldly events and processes and colored with our traditional feelings and emotions. They are often a protest or opposition to other quite as powerful experiences. The emphasis may be placed quite as much on the "No!" as on the "Yea!" A spiritual experience is therefore mostly dialectic in character, which means the suspension of our innermost self between two opposing poles, exposing it to the equal attraction of two opposites, and the final victory of the one over the other. The word GOD spells victory, in the last analysis. It is morally the indescribable gift of a decision which cannot be reached by human means. A temptation is always very close to a spiritual experience, the temptation to analyze, to define what is dynamic, and the temptation to force such dynamics by our own efforts or energy. The men of Oxford and Edinburgh were not spared such temptations on which a watchful eye must be kept. Yet three heavenly gifts descended on the conferences to which the following chapters allude, hesitatingly and humbly, rather than that they seek to define or try

to measure that which resists definition and objective recording of evaluation.

a. The Living Christ Rises Above the Conferences

The conferences of Oxford and Edinburgh were certainly not spiritual reservations for especially selected and privileged members of the churches, but they reflected to a certain extent the new spiritual situation in all the churches and were the high places where they might meet and pray in their need and in their noblest aspirations.

The divine services which were held in Oxford and Edinburgh are unforgettable. They gave us the experience that Christian churches can work together if they can pray together. With whom can we pray and worship? Is the answer to this question reserved for theology? Then there may be a recurrence of what happened at the International Theological Seminar at Geneva, when one of these exclusive theologians contended that a Protestant could not pray the Lord's Prayer with a Roman Catholic—a communion in prayer which took place a thousand times during the World War, when dying soldiers had no time to call for a minister of their own confession and drew their last breath while praying that prayer which our Lord

left as a legacy to all Christians, sustained by a member of a Church which has often declared, "No communion in worship!" These dying men grasped a spiritual experience in the face of death itself which their respective churches and their respective theologies would have denied to them officially. They lay under the Great Shadow and felt the invisible hand covering their eyes and knew that it was Death, "but then the silver answer rang — Not Death, but Christ!" Before their breaking eyes the Lord of Eternal Life rose above the smoke and thunder of the battle and assured each one: "Thou art mine! I have redeemed thee!"

We were such soldiers at the conferences, trying to use our theological and ecclesiastical distinctions as weapons against each other; but what came back to us was not the Christology of centuries past, but Christ himself. All these theologians knew through what Christian controversies the person of Christ has had to wander on that theological Via Dolorosa of the fourth and fifth centuries: one nature—two natures —two persons in two natures—one will in two persons or natures—two wills, one independent of the other—and so on and so on! This painful pilgrimage of the Living Christ through the desert of Greek ab-

stractions was not, indeed, repeated. We found our way home from Greek idealism to the biblical realism, from Athens to Bethlehem and Jerusalem. The tendency of the Greek mind to transform life into ideas, concrete realities into abstractions, receded visibly into the background of interest and gave place to the realistic personalism of the Bible. Not Christology came to the fore, but Christ himself; not an ecclesiastical or denominational Christ, but the Christ of the Gospels; not a romantic Christ as Renan saw him, wandering through the Galilean fields in poetic transfiguration; not a mystical Christ filling ascetic hearts and souls with supernatural exaltation and blotting out the boundary line between God and the world; not a moral hero claiming hero-worship; not a speculative Christ of our own creation—none of these, but the Revealed Lord, who is the Son of Man and the Son of God, the Lord and Master who gave his life for us and who summons us to the service of God.

This absence of a visionary enthusiasm, of sentimental mysticism and speculative imaginativeness, was characteristic of the visible spiritual relationship with the Risen Christ which was sought and felt by these assemblies. The conferences were confronted not so

much with a Christ who made us think of God and the world in ontological terms, in concepts endeavoring to illuminate the mystery of being, but with a Christ who represented the will of a personal God rather than the nature of an abstract Divinity. He made us not so much speculative as responsible, and brought us not into a logical but rather into an "existential" relationship to God's mysterious personality. This personal Christ did not allow us to escape into the stratosphere of theoretical, theological thinking, but kept us in the presence of a terrible personal interrogation conducted by God.

No Christian experience has ever exhausted the depth of what Christ means for mankind. Humanity is not capable of encompassing the Divine or to express it once and forever in adequate terms. Even Christian experience can approach the mysterious wealth of this personality only very gradually.

It could not but become apparent that the Christian mind and faith, as represented in these conferences, has receded from a merely historical or psychological conception of the Person of the Redeemer. History and psychology retain their place and task in the exploration of reality. But they cannot reveal to us the Son of God, the Word Incarnate in Jesus

Christ giving His life for the redemption of the world. Christ seen without faith is no longer Christ. The Biblical Christ is Christ seen and accepted by faith, and faith is not speculation about God's mysteries but the seizure of man by the Living God and man's answer in such a confrontation.

The former liberal and humanistic experience or conception of Christ which dominated the nineteenth century was scarcely heard of at these conferences. The contribution which it once brought has been digested, criticized, and evaluated at its real worth. The Christ who rose above the conferences was not the Good Man, the Moral Hero, the Social Reformer, the Great Proletarian, the Best Councilor, the Religious Philosopher, the Skillful Educator, the Idealistic Pacifist, but the Son and Revealer of God, the Saviour of mankind, the Redeemer and Sovereign of our lives, the Κύριος, the Lord of the Kingdom to come. Where he is present, man does not merely develop the finest flower of human nature—a religious conviction; but divine forces break through into a world of sin and death; a divine will stretches out a saving hand, a Word is spoken long before our human words can find a religious expression for our answer; a sinner is pardoned and saved. Man no longer makes

inquiries into the psychology or the character of Jesus or of the nature of his Kingdom and of the conditions under which it shall come, but waits for it tremblingly and hopefully and strains his eyes for it from a lookout in a world which seems to be closing upon human efforts. The eschatological character of the message of Jesus was manifestly stressed as an expression of the despair of men to change this world with worldly methods or even with our best moral and social aspirations. God must save the world—not we; or only in so far as He may use us.

The emphasis on this eschatological character of the Gospel, as Albert Schweitzer had discovered before us, had a visible effect on the moral and social attitude of the conferences. Christianity is no longer simply loyalty to Christ, a final moral effect to do good and to transform the world, an optimistic missionary propaganda, but first of all an act of God, an annunciation of grace, then an obedience of faith, and a final surrender to his will.

The influence of modern European theology was distinctly felt in the fact that the American members kept their former democratic optimism in regard to the Social Gospel and Pacifism in the background. The climate of mutual understanding which

pervaded the meetings warmed our hearts. First things again came first. And the first place in Christian life and thought was again willingly and thankfully given to our Lord Jesus Christ, to his saving Word, and not to abstract philosophic, social, or educational tasks, which however have their distinctive place in the application of faith to the present world conditions. Ethics became not so much an expression of the highest effort of the will of man, but the simple attempt to be Christlike and to live by grace. The visible change in the attitude of American theologians made mutual fellowship much easier, although a conference is not the place to penetrate together into the deepest structure of the Christian psychology and theology of the various continents. The National Preaching Mission of the Federal Council, by shifting the evangelical interest in America from the periphery to the center—the annunciation of the Gospel—has prepared very happily for such a spiritual *rapprochement*.

No one who followed the expression of Christian faith in life and thought and prayer could overlook the remarkable change in the spiritual climate of the conferences. Christ was the center—the Christ from above. There were those present who had not yet

entered into this personal and responsible relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and aimed at a monistic theology which had little use for the "skandalon" of the Cross. But an attentive follower of the devotional exercises in St. Mary's the Virgin (Oxford) could feel that the uniqueness of Christ was again understood as the specific act of God, who refuses to bring His actions under the rules of religious monism, of men and the universal laws of logic which are cogent in science.

The ecumenical conferences were thus focused at Oxford and Edinburgh upon a common relationship to the mysterious personality of Jesus Christ as Divine Lord of the Church, Redeemer and Master of our whole individual and social life.

At Edinburgh the conference for a time had nourished the hope of reaching dogmatic agreement in a common doctrine of the Church as a whole. Our theological controversies, and therefore our disagreement in ecclesiastical declarations, showed that agreement has reached limitations which for the present cannot be passed. To this extent, Edinburgh means resignation so far as unity in theological formulation is concerned. But it was not resignation in regard to

that spiritual relationship with Christ within which we find a unity resisting theological definition.

Christ was visibly in the center of the conferences, as a Person, not an idea; a personal revelation and guarantee of God, not a manifestation of impersonal natural forces or of fateful historic events. The emphasis which was thus laid on the person and work of Christ showed that Christian faith and experience are focused not so much in the general religious doctrine of creation which is not specific for Christian teaching, but in that specific relationship to a divine personality which we call revelation and redemption. Creation is hardly accessible to human experience. The personal divine act of revealing Christ to human persons, of announcing in a personal way to the sinner the divine pardon and grace, is that personalism in all our human relations which is so eminently essential to Christian faith and life. Christian faith is characterized by faith in Christ. Even faith in God, creation, and our own action receive their interpretation and motive from this focal fire and light emanating from the personality of Christ. This spiritual experience was evidently the fertile ground out of which grew the message of the conferences: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." The

conference at Edinburgh declared that "the first duty of the Church is that it be in very deed the Church—confessing the true faith, committed to the fulfillment of the will of Christ, its only Lord, and united in him in a fellowship of love and service. The call to ourselves and to the world is to Christ. Our unity in Christ is not a theme for aspiration. It is an experienced fact. We can speak of it with boldness because our conference is an illustration of it. We are one in Christ. This unity consists in the sovereignty and redeeming acts of its one Lord. The source of unity is not the consenting movement of men's will, it is Jesus Christ, whose one life flows through the body and subdues the many wills to his."

Here it is declared that not only our relationship to God is centered in Christ but that our life and action receives its meaning and ruling principle not from a natural law, not from ethics, not from a commandment, but from that specific relationship to Christ which we call obedience.

The faith and life of the Christian Church are Christocentric. The doctrine of God and the comprehension of the Holy Spirit receive their true light from our understanding of Christ.

What does this mean as a spiritual experience? It

means that the word and message of Christ have touched us personally, existentially—that is to say, responsibly. It is the relationship between a Thou and an I or a We! Christian experience is the personalization of our faith, thought, and life through this personal relationship to Christ.

It is not so much a mystical experience in the general religious connotation because mysticism readily effaces the personalism of such a relationship.

It is not so much sacramental experience or only in so far as the sacramental act conserves its personal meaning, because a person cannot be assimilated otherwise than by a personal act of confidence and obedience, an act of liberty and love.

It is not so much or at any rate not simply a cognitive relationship, because a person cannot become an object; it remains a Thou facing an I. A spiritual experience means, therefore, being summoned, being confronted with a divine Thou, a challenge answered by faith and obedience. The world conferences were a new and more personal confrontation of the Christian churches with Christ.

This is a mystery. It gives food for thought. The question remains: Whence do we know about Christ? Are the sources reliable? Has Christian tradition

given us an accurate interpretation of this personality?

But these questions are irrelevant. These critical questions arise in the "aula," in the antechamber of that sanctuary where Christ meets the human soul through His Word.

This central spiritual experience shows up clearly behind the declarations of the conferences and above all in the background of the devotional services. They were, even when they did not say it, a conversation with Christ. We thought of God in terms of this life. Prayer was addressed to God—an expression of both the distress and the joy of this personal relation. The utterances of the conferences bore the earnest desire to be Christlike.

The conditions of Christian unity are to be found likewise in the nearness to Him. The nearer we come to Christ, the nearer we come to each other. When I first penned this sentence, the pen had reversed its elements and it stood: The nearer we come to each other, the nearer we come to Christ. The spiritual experience of the conferences was the contrary: Christ brings us nearer together when we come nearer to him. The initiative is with Christ, not with us. Religion begins with man, the pious effort of longing. The

Christian faith begins with Christ, with the Living God who acted, first and before any human initiative, through Christ His Son.

Christ stands therefore not only in the center of theology and of Christian ethics, but in the center of the Christian worship. While theology proved its inability to present an expression of unity, the Divine Service, with Word and Sacrament, visualized and made audible and palpable the word of Christ, whose presence was not achieved through an act of thinking, but in the mysterious act of a confrontation which leaves no one unmoved at its judgment and mercy.

Worship opened a new way toward each other. Worship is perhaps the royal ecumenical road. Theology has been more of a barrier than a way to unity, and practical co-operation could not readily be expressed, symbolically, in one visible action of an ecumenical nature. Worship has, therefore, a binding and unifying significance which neither theological thinking nor ethical idealism possesses. Christian worship is far from being a mere esthetic expression of Christian life, or an artistic decoration of it. It is faith as the symbolic manifestation of the Christian congregation. It is faith as that holy conversation

between God and the Church. It is faith, not as a theoretical formula, but as the spoken word, the symbolic act, an exchange between Him who gives and those who receive. It is the invisible word becoming visible, audible, and dynamic. It is a continuing incarnation, because the Christian cult has no meaning if Christ is not born into the congregation, to be present in His word and His sacrament. This relationship to the risen Christ is so essential that the forms of the rites have little relevance. The Catholic Church shows here a liberality and tolerance—for instance, in regard to the Orthodox Uniate rites—which is unusual.

At Oxford we were guests in the house of worship of the Anglican Church of St. Mary's-the-Virgin, and at Edinburgh we were similarly invited by the Church of Scotland into the House of God of St. Giles. Protestants who followed in a true devotional spirit the liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer could hardly overlook the fact that the great fundamental truths of the Bible are here proclaimed: the misery of man and the redeeming grace of God, and that Christ is the focus of such worship. This liturgy is less controversial than the semi-Pelagian Anglican theology. It is a bridge between the symbolic richness and dig-

nity of the Greek and Roman Catholic Churches and the sober concentration of Protestant piety on sovereign grace. The controversial elements do not appear in this connection, nor do questions of church structure and apostolic succession: the figure of Christ stands in the foreground of the devotional act of the Church and of the adoration of its members. On the other hand, a Christocentric piety, nourished not only by tradition, but through the Bible, must feel in a truly evangelical service that the congregation meets "to see Christ" and that sermon and liturgy have no other purpose than to bring Christ and the Christian heart into such a fellowship that the Church is ever and ever born again.

We may say the same thing about the Orthodox cult. The writer once stood, by special permission of the bishop, behind the "iconostas"—the sacred screen between the sanctuary and the congregation—and followed carefully the words of the liturgy of St. Chrysostom. Those Protestants who were privileged to do the same at Oxford and Edinburgh felt that, despite a rather long and elaborate display of ritual symbolism, the essentials of Christian worship were there, Christ's person and office held the central place, even though a simplification of the symbolic rites

into the unadorned Gospel might be necessary for members of the Reformation and post-Reformation churches.

Where Christ is, there is the Church. And because Christ stood in the midst of all these churches, the Church of Christ was there and was born anew in the hearts of those who felt united in Him and by Him.

An avenue may here open even toward the Roman Catholic Church, which was not represented, although Catholic individuals were present. In so far as the Catholic Church makes true what one of the late popes promised—to restore everything in Christ—she is standing in the holy circle of those who are in the world but not of the world because Christ has saved them from the world. Roman dogma and Roman jurisdiction are still unsurmountable barriers to union. But they cannot keep a stream, or at least a rivulet, of spiritual experience from flowing under those barriers from one group to the other. When Cardinal Faulhaber declared, "We are not redeemed by German blood, but by the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ," he expressed a common spiritual faith and experience. Cardinal Faulhaber stated before the Oxford Conference met that the absence of an official Roman delegation should not be

interpreted as an unfriendly act, and Bishop Count Preysing for the first time spoke of "Protestant brethren." This is a new and hitherto unused term in Roman Catholic vocabularies, and shows that the controversy between Rome and the Reformation has reached the point where re-orientation is sought in the person and grace of Jesus Christ. A German Jesuit, Przywara, recently defined the present differences in the following terms: "Catholicism teaches the *all*-efficacy (*All-Wirksamkeit*) of grace, while Protestantism teaches the *sole* efficacy of grace (*Allein-Wirksamkeit*)." The spiritual experience which is meant here may be different; but what creates such experience—namely, grace—originates in a common source, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

If there is a road leading from one to the other, it can be no other than that which Dr. Henry Smith Leiper called "the road toward the sources of the primitive Christian Church, to a spiritual Bethlehem, a rebirth of the Christian Churches as the Church of Christ."

Nothing gave us a stronger impulse in this direction than the younger churches of the East. If they resist the importation of our denominational differences, they do it because they have a vision of the Living

Christ who is stronger than the historic tradition of denominational Christology.

b. The Wind Bloweth Where It Listeth

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth." (John 3: 8.)

One may speak of the theology of these conferences. Both the world conferences had a solid theological background. It was not built on the sand of lofty idealism nor on that of pious emotionalism, nor yet on shallow pragmatism, but on a foundation of truth. Therefore, the labors of the conferences undoubtedly will mean the beginning of a rethinking of the Church and of its message, a theological reorientation.

One may speak of the psychology of the conferences and of the various churches represented there. It was reflected in mutual contacts and in the emotional climate of the meetings. Churches have or perhaps are a specific personality with a specific accent, either on the thought side or on the emotional ability or on the will character. We may perhaps distinguish thinking, feeling, and acting churches. The psychology of various nations, races, and churches

flowed into the spiritual heritage of Christianity and gave distinctive coloring to their whole way of thinking and believing. An analysis of these psychological differences would no doubt shed light on certain theological difficulties of the existing controversies between them. The theology one chooses has a certain affinity to one's own character, even if the question of truth is not thereby decided. The conferences were a veritable "hunting ground" for comparative religious psychology, which should not, however, be confounded with religious psychologism.

One may also speak of the "ethos" of a conference. I mean by that the dominating will of a gathering to shape a decision and to prepare and initiate action. There have been "spectator conferences" comparable to a theater where the spectators do not wish to act but to hear and to see, manifestations which manifest nothing, so that the definition can be made: a conference is preliminary to another conference. The ethos of the Oxford and Edinburgh conferences was expressed in the will to remain together. But here an almost unsurmountable difficulty arose, and there were moments when we had, not a vision of Christian unity, but of the end of such unity; moments when

the cry was on many a lip: "Israel, to your tents." But, we remained together!

We have therefore to speak not only of the theology, the psychology, the ethos, but also of the miracle of the conferences. This miracle is the mystery of the Holy Spirit, which defies definition. Hence there is no satisfactory theology of the Holy Spirit. It is an embarrassing chapter in Christian dogmatics. Man tries to define what cannot be defined. In such definition and theological formulation there often lies hidden that last and subtle residue of a will-to-power which tries to possess God by the use of rational concepts as vessels for suprarational forces. If the finite mind cannot master the infinite God, it tries to bind Him by finite concepts, which are the invisible fingers of the human intellect endeavoring to lay hold of God.

The action of the Holy Spirit resists such irreverent attempts of man. It silences both the theological lust for definitions and that pragmatic optimism which believes itself to be in possession of God's mysteries.

The Holy Ghost is the mystery of God, the mystery of His will and act. He remains an Unknown God even after His revelation. Yet in the action of the Holy Ghost, His mystery comes near to us; it is no

longer remote in a distant, unknown divinity, but within us: God's mystery within us which cannot be understoood or proven because it is mystery: which cannot be defined nor explained, but is simply there—in our hearts and in our churches. It is paradoxical. God's mystery and God's revelation are dialectical: the Unknown God has become manifest, revealed—He remains paradoxically mysterious. This passes all understanding. It is a mystery which makes even theologians humble. We were united in a mystery. Our theologies said, "Unity cannot be; the differences are too great. Unity is not possible." The Holy Ghost caused us to feel, "It *is*. You *are* one." One, not in a formula, not in a theory, not in a program, not in an organization, but one in Jesus Christ and in His gift: the Holy Ghost. One, not in a human or Christian denominator; one in God's plan and will and act. Unity *is*, as a divine protest against human disharmony. Unity *is*, as a divine reaction against Christian divisions. Unity *is*, spiritually and dynamically, although it cannot be expressed theologically and organically.

All the theologies of the world had their way at Edinburgh. They spoke with might of centuries and in the armor of theoretical truth. Each, or nearly

each, of these theologies has once been a flaming pyre, an auto-da-fé, burning to ashes another theology which it dubbed "heretic." Yet, in spite of those historic pyres—in Holland, at Constance, in Spain, in France, at Smithfield—they lived on and Edinburgh might easily have become another "robber-synod of Ephesus," where monks and theologians hammered their truths with clubs into the heads of their theological adversaries. Nothing of the sort happened, however. The pandemonium of the Christian divisions in history became a panorama of spiritual unity. What had been declared to be a theological impossibility became a spiritual reality; spiritual, therefore hidden, not manifest; spiritual, therefore dynamic, not theoretical. The Spirit, like the wind, blew where it listed and not where *we* listed. It was a dynamic Presence, making tangible God's word and our faith and experience; transforming them into a unity of God's word and man's questing after God; of spiritual power and Christian faith; of God's challenge and man's answer: "Lord, here we are. Send us, the churches of different creeds and traditions, into the world as the one redeeming force of Thy grace!"

This Holy Presence constituted a crisis for the assemblage of theological truths which the various

church delegations represented. We felt that our theological, subjective, and denominational truth is not yet the truth of the Holy Spirit, because it divides while the Holy Spirit, the Church-Builder, unites. Our theological formulations are, at best, still but human truth, through which a divine truth shines. The truth of the Holy Spirit is God's truth, in our heart and experience, the inner witness: *testimonium spiritus sancti,* clear and transparent, like a crystal which has eliminated in its purity all the troubled elements of the former solution.

The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, was the divine consolation for our Christian hearts which suffered under the divisions produced by Christian thought and beliefs. This Comforter healed, not the wounds which the theology of past centuries had dealt to the Church, but the bitterness of those who had suffered them. Not the divisions were healed, but the divisiveness which prefers separation to love, theological thinking to spiritual unity. The scars of these wounds are still visible, but they are no longer bleeding, because we no longer felt as separate bodies but as the one body of Christ, who was present in all of us, through the Holy Spirit. This is the miracle of these ecumenical gatherings.

The appeal from theological thinking to the power and tribunal of the Holy Spirit prepared an understanding where theoretical discussion failed. When, for instance, our Orthodox brethren were able to understand our evangelical doctrine of "justification by faith" in terms of the Holy Spirit, the rift separating the two bodies became smaller. The Orthodox Church emphasizes, perhaps more than any other church, the presence of the Holy Spirit in that cosmic process which is their concept of redemption. Therefore, this Church places the basic, symbolic, and realistic act, the Holy Communion, under an invocation of the Holy Spirit, the "epiklesis" which the Protestant Episcopal Church has also received. It declares thereby that a miracle is achieved not by a magic formula or the craft of the priest, but by the miracle of miracles, the Holy Spirit. The belief in the Holy Spirit is for them the belief in that mysterious presence and tradition which God creates and by which we are assured that our highest spiritual experience is not the result of our moral or religious effort, but the work of the Holy Spirit. What evangelicals call "justification by faith," their basic doctrine, became understandable as a theological expression of the fact that the Holy Spirit is working in our trembling hearts that "voli-

tion and accomplishment" (*Wollen und Vollbringen*) which grace means for us.

The evangelicals understood, on the other hand, why an ancient creed of the Western Church taught that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son (*a patre filioque*). The spiritual experience of our present time, which pulsed in the conferences like the ocean in a small bay, proved the spiritual wisdom and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in defense of this doctrine. The spiritual peril of the religious experience today consists in a vague conception of the Holy Spirit as being no more than the universal creative force of God in nature and history. The Holy Spirit is then understood as the immanent mystical force in man, as the pantheistic divine presence in all creation, as the life-creating process in history and tradition. By adding "and from the Son" the ancient creed warned us that the Holy Spirit is not simply a vague mystical force but the spirit of Christ, the Son of God. "The Lord is the Spirit." The Spirit is not the voice of blood, or the genius of a leader, or the creative impulses of history, but the life of the Risen Christ, present in his believers, the vivifying, educational, personal action of God, through His word, Jesus Christ.

The consciousness of the conference was a seismograph for the spiritual experience of present-day Christianity. The Germans were therefore not absent from the conferences. Their great spiritual experience in a common Holy Communion between Lutherans and Reformed at the Synod of the Confessional Church in Halle was one of the tidal currents sweeping into the bay of which we spoke above. For centuries Lutherans and Reformed were divided on this point. They were given the grace, through the Holy Spirit, at that Synod, to celebrate together the Holy Communion and to express this act of the Holy Spirit in an agreement. The same spiritual experience was developing in the heart of the Archbishop of Canterbury when he desired to invite us all to the Lord's Table and when we accepted this invitation under a similar impulse. The desire, the inspiration, was greater than the power to accomplish it as a crowning act of spiritual unity. Yet the desire itself, the vision of a Christianity united at the Lord's Table, the inspiration to seek the way toward each other, this cry of the Christian heart, "Draw nearer together, by coming nearer to Christ," was in itself a spiritual experience which we hope will be a prelude to the fulfillment of our common Christian aspiration. The

best part of God's word is a promise. What was felt at that Communion Service in St. Mary's-the-Virgin was not so much a realization of the final unity, as the promise of unity by God's word and the action of the Holy Spirit in Christian hearts. This spiritual experience means that God's Presence in His churches is not a "datum" but a continuous act, so that even His word in the Bible needs this quickening inspiration to become efficacious. Not even the Bible is a manna which can be stored up for the next day, as a given truth, given once and forever. What is divine here is the act of speaking, the dynamic act of the Spirit which fills the Word with the Divine Presence, with its comfort, its challenge, with its promise, and thereby makes words, The Word.

Words have come to their limit of usefulness, especially at the Edinburgh Conference. No theological skill, no genius of compromise, no Christian symbol of goodwill can show us the way out of the dogmatic impasse into which the theological discussion was led. From a theological standpoint it seems impossible to harmonize such contradictory statements as "The Bible is the sole source and norm of Christian faith"—"The Bible must be complemented by tradition;" "The Word of God is prior to the Church—the

Church is prior to the Word," or "Grace is sovereign and exclusive"—"Grace is effective in human efforts," or "An episcopal structure is essential for the Church"; conversely, "It is not essential," or "The Virgin Mary merits the reverence of Christians," "The Virgin Mary has no mediatory function."

No way out is left from these contradictory statements. It is the last word of an ecumenical-controversial theology. But there began the action of the Holy Spirit, in spite of these controversies, a common and growing spiritual experience. It was the experience of Christians belonging to various churches, who are one in their faith in the living Christ, wafted together by the Holy Spirit in spite of their resistance, one in the grip of a divine promise.

In the theological despair of Edinburgh, the deepest spiritual experience found its expression in that pentecostal cry of present-day Christianity: "Veni Creator Spiritus." It was not left unanswered.

The spiritual experience of which we speak here quite inadequately is certainly not of a static but of a dynamic nature. Not the static systematic unity of a church structure rose before our eyes, but we were under the spell of a dynamic act creating the para-

doxical spiritual experience that we, divided as we are, are already *one* in Christ; His Church, by faith.

A blessing descended upon us, but we could not take it home as if it had been something static, a "datum," a formula, a theology, an organization, or a project. But we can bear witness and pray that God may continue to wake the sleeping world of the churches and prove by such action that He is a living, acting, and dynamic God. This becomes a spiritual experience of a kind that remembers not so much what God *did*, but what He *does*, here and now. Karl Barth was once asked whether there is a religious certainty. He answered quietly: "There *is* no certainty of faith—He *gives* certainty of faith." In this discrimination between an objective gift and a dynamic act lay perhaps the deepest experience of the conferences. Everyone was prepared to admit: there is no "datum" in this world upon which a new world can be built. There is no worldly program which contains a satisfactory solution for our needs. There is not even a Christian "datum"—a given formula, principle, experience, creed, dogma, *any* objective means which guarantees the building of a new world order. There is no known "way out" of the present chaos. There is no remedy at the disposal of human

powers. *He gives* the remedy. *He* leads the way. *He* works our salvation. *He* alone builds a new world. The dynamism of such divine action is a spiritual experience which we could not have as long as we thought that we possessed, perhaps in the Bible, or in dogma, or in tradition, a solution of all our problems, a once-and-forever axiom, and as long as we believed in our human acts because we did not see or believe in the necessity for divine action. In the present impotence of every power on which we relied—reason, will, wisdom, love, programs, League, State, science, Church—we are learning to stand still before the face of God. We were frightened by the outbreak of demonic forces in the world. But God opened our eyes as He did those of the youth who attended Elijah so that we see the heavenly host around our beleaguered city. The Prince of this World displays his strength more than ever at the present time, and we need a power which we do not own in order to withstand his assaults. But the Spirit of God gave witness to our hearts that the victory is His and faith is that wonderful anticipation of Christ's victory over a world which seems to prove the defeat of Christianity.

c. The Vision of a New Church

An old Church is dying. The end of a Church is a historic Christian experience. Where is the indigenous Christian Church of Northern Africa—the Church of Augustine and Cyprian? Gone! Where is the ancient Church of Asia Minor—the Church of Ephesus and Smyrna and Iconium? It has come to an end. Where is the formerly great Nestorian Church in China? It died.

But at the conferences of Oxford and Edinburgh these dead churches of the past were not present in our minds as mere historic recollections. We seemed to have in our nostrils the reek of decay emanating from so much that has died in the Christian Church not only in times past but in the present.

For instance: Outwardly, the Church in Russia is dying or dead. She has lost her fine church buildings, a large part of her hierarchy—hundreds of bishops and thousands of priests—her academies and theological faculties, her administrative offices and personnel, her wealth, her treasures of gold and precious stones, her sacred relics—yea, the Bible itself. The thought of the sufferings and martyrdom of this Church was all-pervasive at the conferences. One could not look upon the Christlike face of Father Bulgakoff of the

Russian Orthodox Seminary in Paris without having a human vision of crucifixion. Never was there such a vicarious suffering in which the Christian communion took upon its own heart the burden of other churches.

The suffering of the churches in Russia, in Rumania, in Poland, in Germany, in Spain, in Italy, in Austria, in Belgium, in China, where the evangelical churches are fighting for their very lives, was during the conferences *our* suffering and *our* burden.

Sometimes we asked: Can the church stand up under such pressure? Will the Church of the Reformation in Germany come to an end? Can the gospel of sovereign grace be preached no longer? Is Jesus Christ no longer the sole Lord of the Church? Is the Church to lose the liberty on which she throve? Hundreds of pastors in Germany are in prison. An official state philosophy is being taught in the schools there which is opposed to Christian doctrine. The official protagonist of National Socialism, Alfred Rosenberg, ridicules the Christian ideal of living as one of weaklings, and opposes to them the "heroic" ideals of the "Strong Man"—power, honor, pride, discipline. His attack on the World Conference of Oxford shows the profound difference which exists

between "religion" and revelation of God in Jesus Christ, between faith and religious idealism, between a "Church" which is nearing its end, and the Church of Christ which rises when the world inters it.

Following the teachings of the French sociologist, Georges Sorel, who was the teacher of Mussolini, the State uses its power against the Church which confesses its transcendent creed, and teaches an ethos of violence which endeavors to give a metaphysical basis to its use of force. Is this to be the end of Christianity as an organized religion? We can see churches dying not only where church buildings are going up in flames, as in Spain, where the ministers of the Church are imprisoned as in Germany, or shot, as in Russia, but we can see this dying daily in our large cities and in many so-called Christian countries.

The conferences had to face the fact that large parts of the population in countries once Christian can no longer be reached by the gospel of Christ. France, for instance, has roughly 41,000,000 inhabitants. The Roman Catholic Church claims only ten millions; the Protestant churches not more than one million, all told. Where are the other thirty-odd millions? These are the dying Church of France!

What is the significance of the millions who gave

up their Christian faith for modern indifference, secularism, and skepticism? It is an indication that where these new world powers take possession of the human soul, the end of the Church is nigh.

What will become of the Church in America if half of her children grow up without any religious instruction? The end or failure of religious education forecasts an ultimate end of a Church which would thus lose her missionary spirit and her educational influence on the young generation.

A survey of organized Christianity made at Oxford and Edinburgh could easily show us that churches today are not only wiped out by force but are dying from many diseases. This is a sad sight of spiritual death, a ghastly field strewn with the bones of human ambition, egotism, nationalism, individualism, human idealism, and secularism, which in the very midst of present-day Christianity tries to create "churches" but acquires only numerous sociological groups, schisms, and sects, because the Holy Spirit has been the sole "Church-builder" since Pentecost. It was a remarkable experience to realize that, in spite of our differences, the sectarian spirit was absent in the spiritual atmosphere of Oxford and Edinburgh. Yea, it seems that those churches that remained away are now

in danger of being classified as sects that refused to share a spiritual experience with their brethren.

It became evident, in our terrible vision of dying churches, that not only do such churches come to an end, but with them the diseases from which they are dying. For instance, it is safe to say that Oxford and Edinburgh put an end to that Protestant individualism which was so wittily derided by Coleridge when he said: "I belong to that holy and infallible church of which at the present time I am the only member!" Oxford and Edinburgh placed a tombstone on the grave of this Protestant "hybrid."

In the same manner we saw the end of a religious idealism which believed in ideals, started with ideals, adored ideals, forgot the terrible reality of evil, and believed in optimistic naïveté that the world is becoming better, day by day. After the downfall of the democratic illusion, "making the world safe for democracy," of the optimistic but impotent "Social Gospel," of too-hopeful pacifism, of a religious glorification of the League of Nations, of the hopes placed in the prohibition movement, we all began to realize that the demonic realism of the world resists this shallow optimistic idealism of Christianity and that we

need stronger forces than those of ideals and Christian conferences and their programs.

The Church of power, of wealth, of national or class limitation, of success and security, has come to an end. Such churches must die lest we forget that Christ had no place to lay his head, and that he died on Golgotha; lest we forget that his Church began as a tiny flock, that it was persecuted, poor, and despised; that it was "the Church under the Cross." The new poverty and persecution of the Church point to the fact that it is really returning to the days of its early beginnings.

A well-known Christian leader said at Oxford that certain churches were indeed doomed to die if the Church of Christ were to be brought to life. This judgment is certainly not merely another expression of constructive idealism of the sort which builds one church on the dead body of the previous one. It springs from a feeling that God's wrath and judgment is on any Church built on the narrow basis of a self-confident denominationalism, or of humanistic ethics, or of a rigid formula, or on shallow idealism, and not on the One Rock which is Christ, and Christ alone.

Such experiences of a negative character led those who had the vision of Oxford and Edinburgh to the

profound repentance which lay constantly, like a low-hanging cloud, on the hearts of those assembled there. It was therefore an experience of self-humiliation and repentance, destructive of our pride, our glory, our self-made distinctions, our confessional superiority-complex, our "know-it-all-better" theology. This insight into our shortcomings and weakness is a prerequisite for the spiritual experience of God's Presence and help.

We can find no better expression for this experience than Dostoevski's immortal story of the *Grand Inquisitor*. In it, Jesus comes back to a Spanish town once more to preach the gospel in the streets. The Grand Inquisitor arrests him at once and throws him into prison; preaching the gospel in the streets is not allowed! Late at night the Inquisitor sends for Jesus and asks him: "Why didst Thou come back? Thou hast left Thy task to Thy Church and she knows much better than Thou how to fulfill it. Why, therefore, didst Thou return? Go hence and come no more!" The only answer which Christ gives to the old man is to draw near him and kiss him on his ninety-year-old faded lips. Then He slipped away into the darkness.

Just such a Church as this, which knows better

than Christ, came to an end at Oxford and Edinburgh. We did NOT know better, and confessed our deepest conviction: "Without Thee we can do nought!"

Gazing out from the towers of Oxford over all the world, and seeing dying churches everywhere—dying under persecution in Russia, under restriction in Germany, under the pressure of the State, the seduction by a pagan faith, drowned in indifference, ignorance, and secularism, one might well ask whether Protestantism can become a Church at all. Is Protestantism really a "church-builder" or will it remain a spiritual atmosphere, a refuge for the individual soul, a movement for freedom within a larger authoritarian church? It is five minutes to twelve—it is indeed the last possible minute to answer the question: Does Protestantism really prefer to remain a diffused, vague, troubled, spiritual current mingling with worldly currents and flowing in diverse directions? Christianity may be able to build a new, more faithful, more united Church at the very moment when we really understand the message of the Church of Christ, look forward toward him as our goal, and march under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the direction where the vision will become that reality which he meant when he prayed that they might "all be one."

We needed this complete discouragement of our idealistic or ambitious efforts to build up a Church with our unity program, our religious idealism, our fraternal love, with our organizations and centralized administration, or with a common ecumenical theology or mere ecclesiastical traditions. The breakdown, visible or invisible, of that humanism within the churches reveals once more that Christ himself and his Holy Spirit is the only Church-Builder.

We confessed, therefore, in the Message from the Conference at Oxford: "The unity of this fellowship is not built up from its constituent parts like a federation of different States. It consists in the sovereignty and redeeming acts of its one Lord. The source of unity is not the consenting movement of man's will; it is Jesus Christ, whose one life flows through the Body and subdues the many wills to His." And the same confession was uttered by Edinburgh.

This confession could not have been made without the preliminary spiritual discovery that our ecumenical movement must not mean that melting together of our provisional churches which would bring about the united Church. This Church already exists in so far as He is our common Head, our invisible center of faith, in so far as our faith is this unity in Him.

Oxford and Edinburgh gave us the experience that this Church exists, not as historic reality, a piece of human architecture, man-prepared experience, or merely brotherly Christian fellowship, but as a vision of faith, unreal so far as a sociological fact is concerned, real in faith and hope; impossible to human will, realizable by an act of faith which is the instrument for accomplishing the miracle of the Spirit.

Our Anglican, Old Catholic, and Orthodox friends had pointed out long ago this objective, supernatural, and pre-existent nature of the Church—pre-existent to our human or Christian efforts. They kept alive in the non-Roman Church world a catholic ideal which has not hitherto been acceptable in its ultramontane Roman form. We learned the ABC of such catholicity, not in our controversies with the Roman Church, but in our fraternal evangelical contacts and experiences with the Anglican and Orthodox churches, in our spiritual discovery that our catholicity consists in a relation of faith with Christ and with our separated brethren and not in a cleverly drafted union-formula or a council of churches.

We had our weak moments during the conferences; felt the seduction of the world and the temptation of the devil. Those were the moments when we

asked: "Will we get our reports through? Will we find the shrewd or brilliant formula for our drafts? Will we find a majority for our proposition? Will we have denominational weight and influence? Will the conferences be a success? Can we build up a new and stronger organization?" Such questions brought experiences of shame and humiliation. Then we felt in ourselves and in our midst the peril which threatened the Church.

When we looked toward Christ, the Church of faith was born. Because where Christ is, the Church is. And the nearer we come to Christ the nearer we come to each other. The one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church is not "a posteriori" but "a priori." She is not the final result of our unity movement. The Church exists already *in, cum, et sub* the churches (in, with, and among, to use the formula with which the Lutherans express the sense of the presence of our Lord in the elements of the Holy Communion). She has a pre-existence and co-existence with the empirical churches, which is the promise of her final victory as the one Church Triumphant of Christ.

The State does not permit the Church to be the Church. It tries its best, in certain countries, to make of her a governmental department. A nationalistic

hypnosis does not allow the Church to be the Church, but tries to make it an organ of the nation. A bourgeois capitalistic society does not let the Church be the Church, but makes it a class institution of well-to-do and law-abiding citizens. Natural man does not let the Church be the Church, but takes it as a sociological organism growing out of the highest natural desires and instincts of human nature. The world does not allow the Church to be the Church, but seeks to devour and digest it in its insatiable appetite for synthetic assimilation.

But the most terrifying experience occurs when the Church herself will not let the Church be the Church, the Church of Christ, but makes it the Church of tradition, of a certain theology, of some ecclesiastical faction, of a social or religious program, a man-made Church of human good will and pious fellowship.

Oxford and Edinburgh put an end to such synthetic fusion and bade the Genius of Compromise: "Halt! No further!" This new discrimination between the World and the Church was instrumental in our experience of the spiritual nature and life of the Church. The nineteenth century sought the synthesis of Gospel and Culture, between the Church and the World. The spiritual experience of the last

decades culminated in the insight that this compromise leads toward "entropy," toward the assimilation of the Church by the world. The true nature of the Church is to be a "fellowship from Heaven" in the midst of the World—*in* the World, but not *of* it. In protesting against the claim of totalitarian states and communistic-atheistic programs alike, we feel that the Captain of the Ship of the Church is not steering it toward the dangerous cliffs of a synthetic compromise with the World, but toward the high seas of a "diastasis," of discrimination from the world, whereby she regains her liberty to act upon the World as a force from God, to save it.

This new Church of Faith is born even where old churches are dying, if only Christ is with them. This is the wonderful experience of true disciples of Christ in many lands, and our conferences reflected this experience and shared not only the sufferings but also the new spiritual awakening in other churches.

We said that the Church in Russia is nearing her end. Of the two hundred Lutheran ministers, not more than five or six are still active in their former parishes. Thousands of Orthodox clergymen were killed or banished to concentration camps in Siberia or on the White Sea. But in this distress and persecu-

tion a large number of Russian Christians feel the birth pangs of a new Church of Faith. The old Church lost her hierarchy, a large part of her priests, her treasure, her theological academies, most of her church buildings, her influence on public life. But in the midst of these ruins a Church is born—a Church of an eternal spiritual experience, a Church of Christ. Religious education is forbidden to all under eighteen years of age. But Russian parents, Russian mothers especially, are taking over this task which the State will not and the Church cannot fulfill. They teach their children to believe in Christ and to remain faithful to his Church. They may do it in a crude, untheological, perhaps even superstitious way. But through the mouths of these "babes and sucklings" and through these "poor in spirit," God is saving a Church in the hearts of a young generation which, according to the "Five-Year Plan," was to become an easy prey to paganism through a strictly godless education. The Church is dying, but lo! she lives! The fidelity of these simple Russian women, building up a new Church, the faith of these "two or three" that gather secretly in private homes, in catacombs as did the primitive Christians, strengthened the faith of our assembly of learned theologians and dignified church

leaders and found a repercussion in the spiritual experience of the world conferences.

In Germany the four-hundred-year-old Church of the Reformation seems to be breaking down. We see the end of an ecclesiastical system, the end of a State Church, of evangelical liberty, of the theology of the Reformation. But here again we hear in the midst of falling ruins the intrepid witness of faith: "Here I stand; I can do no other." Hundreds of ministers are in prison, the religious press is muzzled or suppressed, yet when church groups and universities remain silent, perforce, the voice of faith breaks through this silence and proclaims the Word of the Lord and the willingness to obey His command: "Here I am! Send me forth!" In this act of faith, in these witnesses of a small flock, a new Church is born which will not be a State Church, or a National Church, or a Denominational Church, or just a religious "ghetto," but the Church of Faith, based on an act of God and on the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers.

The conferences were not simply spectators of this battle. They shared these experiences of need, of divine help, of a reborn faith. The Church of Christ, battling for her life in Germany, was present at the

conferences though absent. The anxiety of the children of God in the land of the Reformation, their tears and cries, their indomitable heroism of faith, their victories in their defeats, vibrated as a stimulating force in the spiritual life of the conferences.

In Poland, in Transylvania, in Italy, in Spain, and in Belgium the poverty of the evangelical Church is such that poverty is becoming a major problem and a test of faith. It is so perilous that thousands are asking whether it is God's will to deprive them of their evangelical schools, their institutions, their ministry. But in the midst of this terrible poverty these churches are again realizing that Christ was poor, that the first Church went through the same kind of distress, and so they take this poverty as a test for their faith, as the call which the Master addressed to the wealthy man in the Gospel, to give away his wealth and to follow Him. The conferences did not pass by the poverty of these brethren like the priest or the Levite, but declared that their need is our need and those present felt richer through such solidarity, which, however, must still undergo the test of time.

The conflicts, sorrows, and sufferings of these poor and persecuted churches flowed into our own anxiety and into our prayers; but so did their faith and their

courage, and so, our hearts enlarged, we felt the birth pangs of new churches-in-the-making. Their experience became, through such participation, *our* experience. Their isolation was answered by our assurance of a new ecumenical fellowship and solidarity. After such a spiritual baptism by the distress and the martyrdom of fellow-churches, there should no longer be unknown or forgotten Christians who die abandoned and helpless. They should be helped and strengthened by that large spiritual fellowship which, in intercession, sympathy, and faith, is one with them. It is a new solidarity which we promised each other in a sacred bond of that love which Christ brought into a world of horror and hatred.

This spiritual experience of a new Church of Christ, which is world-wide and focusing in the prayers and faith of the conferences, must again flow back, deepened and widened by our fellowship, as a spiritual power into all these churches. Oxford and Edinburgh were a world-wide exchange of great blessings. God sowed in our hearts a spiritual seed which must grow throughout the world and on the scattered acres of even the smallest parishes.

God's mighty plow is opening the furrows—the plow of poverty, of persecution, of all kinds of hard-

ships. It is breaking up the hard soil of our denominational rigidity, of our theological formulae, of our unbelief, of our security.

Hard work will have to be done. The conferences began to re-think the Church. This re-thinking means serious and collective theological study as it is done in the study conferences and in the Ecumenical Seminar in Geneva. Theology cannot be neglected by a spiritual experience because the question of truth will always be a criterion for the nature and value of such experience. Only, let us not forget that a so-called theological truth is not always a spiritual truth or a living reality and a divine impulse.

Great constructive tasks are waiting for our co-operation, for the new fellowship which in the ecumenical movement, for the first time, sees a common Christian task which no single church alone can accomplish. Organizations and councils will be built up, campaigns and crusades will be undertaken.

But all these new tasks need a spiritual impulse. Theology, organization, and machinery are not enough. They become effective only in so far as they are manifestations of a new spiritual power in present-day Christianity, of a new willingness to follow Christ, of a new faith and spiritual experience which

assures us that the nearer we come to Christ the greater things we shall achieve. The nearer we come to Christ, the better we are able to build His Church as that godly saint, in a picture by Moritz von Schwind, who built a chapel in the midst of the forest. The devil tried to trouble his work. But the saint is so deeply rooted in the life of faith that finally he compels the devil to cart the stones which are needed for the construction of the chapel! It is the Church against which the forces of hell will not prevail.

V

FIVE MINUTES TO TWELVE

The World Conferences of the Churches appear like a flashing light on a dark background. It is no overstatement to say that the world is filled with fear and is void of hope today. This hopelessness is perhaps not yet felt in such big and self-sufficient countries as Great Britain and the United States. The political, social, and moral security has not yet been shaken in these countries as is the case on the European continent. Here one can feel that continuous inner trembling of the heart and mind of the peoples which betrays fear and despair. The strong men in the dictator states seem to know no such fear; but Stalin is seeking traitors, Mussolini muzzles the press, and Hitler tries to silence the Church, the champion of liberty, by shutting it up in its own vestry. The mailed fist, the constant menace of violence, the suppression of liberty are no less signs of inner unrest and fear than that apparent trembling of the peoples. The psychology of compensation has taught us to look behind the great and theatrical poses, the forcible

methods, the brutal intolerance, and take them as masks, the mask of the "strong" behind which that weakness appears which we might apostrophize in a variation of Shakespeare's "Frailty, thy name is *Man!*"

There is some reason for trembling today. Wherever we look we discover the helplessness of the world to solve its problems. Where America makes experiments, Europe makes revolutions and prepares for war. But an experiment is as little a real solution as a revolution or a war. An economic experiment which fails may be quite as destructive as a war and there may be no time to try a second experiment. It is five minutes to twelve! The world cannot wait very much longer. Force is no solution. It is a dam behind which a terrible power of resistance and revenge is accumulated. Sooner or later the dam will break and no military or political power will be strong enough to resist the power of hunger, the fury of revenge for centuries of injustice which neither State nor Church nor the ruling class tried to remedy. But even such an experiment gives no security because neither economic science, nor good will, nor force can produce today a satisfactory state of society.

The political tension of the present world is not less acute. It is no longer the competition of political

powers which measure their forces. It is a fight to the death between ideologies, myths, and other philosophies, which give no quarter because they claim to represent, if not an absolute truth, then at least the truth for a new generation or culture. The "Absolutes" are a most dangerous invention of the human mind, because they are imperialistic, totalitarian, and intolerant. When a new "Absolute" appears in the human mind, Mars begins to get a good edge on his sword! The two absolutist philosophies which are apparent behind the present most powerful political systems, are mutually exclusive, intolerant of all else. They have an inner logic, the conclusion of which is war. Unless a political miracle happens, two ideologies, which glorify force by an ethos of force, are bound to measure their strength sooner or later. It is five minutes to twelve on the world's political dial! And democracy is no longer strong enough to hold up the "moving finger," because it lacks today that enthusiasm which gives power to the Bolshevist and to the Fascist armies.

But the struggle evidently goes much deeper than economic or social or political conflicts. The final battle will obviously be not simply one between economic forces, social classes, or political systems.

It will be a religious war. Religion is not only the finest flower of the human mind, but the greatest and most exclusive force of man. It is not so certain whether Tertullian was right when he said that the soul was by nature a Christian. But it is certain, and modern psychologists, like Jung, corroborate this, that the soul by nature is religious. Even atheism can be a form of religion. Subconscious forces of the soul stamp man not only with a terror but with a terrorism which is the most dangerous form of an intolerant, combative instinct. Not only Christianity hears voices which claim obedience, and an unconditional religious attitude is not the exclusive privilege of the Christian Church. The modern paganism is discovering these natural religious forces in the soul of man and is preparing for a decisive battle with Christianity.

It is five minutes to twelve even in the religious situation of the present world. And the future battle will not be one between the Protestant denominations or between Protestantism and Catholicism, but between Christendom and paganism, between Christ and Antichrist. And Europe will be the battlefield.

It is five minutes to twelve! This should not be a "scarehead" phrase, but a challenge to the Church of Christ to use what may be its last opportunity. Fac-

ing this opportunity does not mean rushing into feverish activity, to do a little better the hundred and one things which the World is trying to do. It means, taking the Gospel seriously as the force to save those who believe in it. But as a force from *God*, not as a most sublime and lofty force of man; as revelation in Jesus Christ, and not simply as man-made religion. This Gospel of Jesus Christ, as the Word of God addressed to man, must again be placed in the center of our life and thought. We need a force we have not and which the world has not. God gives it through Christ. This is the final and urgent message of the conference—five minutes before twelve—and of such subsequent movements as the National Preaching Mission in America, which has been bringing this message down to the people, to discouraged ministers, to state officials, to business men, to workers, to women, to students.

We see this clearer today than in the heyday of our expansion, our prosperity, our humanism and secularism. As the World offers no solution, let us try the last, the ultimate, the only one: the Gospel! If we take the Gospel seriously, our insoluble world problems become problems of faith. It is characteristic of our times that all our difficulties are more and more

becoming religious problems. An economic problem may be insoluble as such. A political conflict may offer no satisfactory political solution. A moral or social tension may destroy us. These problems for which political force, economics, social doctrine, moral philosophy find no solution appear more and more as fundamental religious questions for which faith alone has an answer. Not a recipe prescribed in advance, but a dynamic solution which appears in that unique moment when God's Spirit answers a human question and man replies: "Here I am! Send me forth!"

This means at the same time a new baptism of our human relations. They must be immersed in that Holy Presence which makes life sacramental. If our human and Christian relations are really baptized with the Holy Spirit, it will no longer happen that Christianity shows less heroism, less enthusiasm, less of the spirit of sacrifice and self-surrender than Bolshevism or Fascism inspire in their adherents. If our Christian relations are rebaptized, they will not be simply denominational but ecumenical, because it would be a negation of the Holy Spirit to refuse recognition and fellowship to what He has touched and sanctified. A sectarian attitude is a denial of the Holy Spirit, a rebuff of the annunciation that the Spirit

bloweth where it listeth, an annexation and misuse of the Holy Spirit for our secular purposes.

To refuse such fellowship is dangerous at a moment when the forces of evil unite the world over. In the battle between Christ and Antichrist, there is no excuse for Christians to stand aloof. When a "noble knight apologized before a British king for not having been with him in a certain battle, the king said: 'Hang yourself! We fought at Arques—and you were not there!' " Woe to those who prefer their own private warfare to the decisive battle for and against the cause of Christ! Woe to them who are not there when they are needed!

That unconditional attitude of faith is therefore not simply a passive receptivity. We have to do great deeds with God. And what we cannot accomplish we leave to God to do in His own time, and to God's judgment and Christ's final victory at the end of this aeon. Maranatha!

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Oxford Conference on Church, Community, and State (Society)

PUBLICATIONS

The Oxford Conference (Official Reports). Introduction by J. H. Oldham. Summary of the preparatory work, the full reports of the Sections, excerpts from addresses, lists of delegates, and official actions. 290 pages. Willett, Clark.

World Chaos or World Christianity. By Henry Smith Leiper. Church Unity and Union: Oxford and Edinburgh. 200 pages. Willett, Clark.

The Message and Decisions of Oxford. Booklet containing official text. 88 pages. Universal Christian Council.

Set of six booklets containing the *Message* and five *Reports of Oxford with Discussion Outlines.* Universal Christian Council.

Highlights of Oxford. By Henry Smith Leiper. Brief story of the Conference and its most important actions. 16 pages. Universal Christian Council.

The Message of the Oxford Conference to the Christian Churches. Universal Christian Council.

INTRODUCTORY STUDIES OF OXFORD ISSUES

Church, Community, and State: A World Issue. By J. H. Oldham. Booklet setting forth urgency of crisis confronting churches and reasons for a new effort to meet it co-operatively. 47 pages. Harper.

Christ's Way and the World's—in Church, State, and Society. By Henry Smith Leiper. 144 pages. Abingdon.

Discussion Syllabus for use with the above in group study. 16 pages. Universal Christian Council.

The Church and the World Crisis. A Study Outline. By Charles H. Corbett. 40 pages. Universal Christian Council.

Christianity—and Our World. By John C. Bennett. 65 pages. Association Press.

Church and State. By Rhyllis A. Goslin. Headline Book of Foreign Policy Association. Illustrated with charts. 46 pages. Foreign Policy Association.

The Churches Survey Their Task (The Report of the Conference at Oxford, July, 1937). With an introduction by J. H. Oldham. George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., London.

FOR THE SERIOUS STUDENT

Church and State in Contemporary America. By William Adams Brown. 384 pages. Scribners.

Church and State on the European Continent. By Adolf Keller. 382 pages. Epworth Press, London.

Church and State in the Modern World. Edited by Henry P. Van Dusen. 223 pages. Harper.

Christian Faith and the Modern State. By Nils Ehrenstrom. Willett, Clark.

Christianity in the Eastern Conflicts: A Study in Christianity, Communism, and Nationalism in Asia. By William Paton. 224 pages. Willett, Clark.

FOR BACKGROUND OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Christian Unity in Practice and Prophecy. By Charles S. Macfarland. 396 pages. Macmillan.

Steps Toward the World Council. By Charles S. Macfarland. Revell.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

OXFORD CONFERENCE SERIES ON CHURCH, COMMUNITY, AND STATE

The Church and Its Function in Society. By Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft and Dr. J. H. Oldham. 238 pages. Willett, Clark.

The Christian Understanding of Man. By Prof. T. E. Jessop, Prof. R. L. Calhoun, Prof. N. N. Alexeiev, Prof. Emil Brunner, Pastor Pierre Maury, the Rev. Austin Farrer, Prof. W. M. Horton. Willett, Clark.

The Kingdom of God and History. By Prof. C. H. Dodd, Dr. Edwyn Bevan, Dr. Christopher Dawson, Prof. Eugene Lyman, Prof. Paul Tillich, Prof. H. Wendland, Prof. H. G. Wood. Willett, Clark.

The Christian Faith and the Common Life. By Dr. M. Dibelius, Prof. John Bennett, The Archbishop of York, Prof. Reinhold Niebuhr, the Rev. H. H. Farmer, Dr. W. Wiesner. Willett.

Church and Community. By Prof. E. E. Aubrey, Prof. E. Barker, M. Björkquist, Dr. H. Lilje, Prof. S. Zankov, Prof. Paul Douglass, Prof. K. S. Latourette, M. Boegner. Willett, Clark.

Church, Community, and State in Relation to Education. By Prof. F. Clarke, Paul Monro, Prof. W. Zenkovsky, C. E. Morris, J. W. D. Smith, Prof. P. H. Kohnstamm. Willett, Clark.

The Universal Church and the World of Nations. By the Marquess of Lothian, Prof. Sir Alfred Zimmern, Dr. O. von der Gablentz, John Foster Dulles, Pastor W. Menn, the Rev. V. A. Demant, Dr. Otto Piper, Canon C. E. Raven. Willett, Clark.

WORLD CONFERENCE ON FAITH AND ORDER PUBLICATIONS

(Except where otherwise noted, the publisher is the Secretariat of the World Conference on Faith and Order, 111 Fifth Avenue, New York.)

Report of the Edinburgh Conference. The complete Report as finally received by the Conference for transmission to the

Churches; also the Affirmation of Unity, and the recommendations regarding the proposed World Council of Churches.

Edinburgh, 1937. The story of the Second World Conference on Faith and Order. By Hugh Martin. 99 pages (paper cover). S. C. M. Press, London.

Common Acts of Worship. Selections from the United Service in St. Paul's Cathedral for delegates to Oxford and Edinburgh, and from the services at Edinburgh during the Conference.

An Act of Thanksgiving. The closing service at Edinburgh, reprinted from the above pamphlet in a four-page folder, for use in responsive worship.

Affirmation of Unity. The statement adopted by the Conference on the closing day. Four-page folder.

PRELIMINARY REPORTS OF THE THEOLOGICAL COMMISSIONS

The Theology of Grace. (Pamphlet No. 66.) A study of the theological questions associated with the doctrine of Grace.

Notes for the use of Section 1 of the Edinburgh Conference. (Pamphlet No. 88.) Suggestions from the Theological Secretary as to points requiring special consideration by the Section on Grace. English, French, and German.

The Church and the Word of God. (Pamphlet No. 87.) A study of the doctrine of the Word, so prominent in Lutheran theology.

The Ministry and Sacraments. (Pamphlet No. 81.) A study of these related subjects, historically and theologically.

The Church's Unity in Life and Worship. A book and four pamphlets as follows:

A Decade of Objective Progress in Church Unity, by Dr. H. Paul Douglass. 140 pages. Harper.

The Meanings of Unity. (Pamphlet No. 82.) A constructive

study of the relation of co-operation, federation, corporate union, etc., to the ideal of Christian Unity. Harper.

The Communion of Saints. (Pamphlet No. 83.) The relation of the Church Visible and Invisible. Harper.

The Non-Theological Factors in the Making and Unmaking of Church Union. (Pamphlet No. 84.) A study of influences such as culture, race, and language, which affect unity. Harper.

Next Steps on the Road to a United Church. (Pamphlet No. 85.) Practical suggestions for more effective expression of existing unity and for further progress. Harper.

BOOKS PUBLISHED FOR THE FAITH AND ORDER MOVEMENT

Faith and Order: The Proceedings of the World Conference at Lausanne, 1937. Edited by Dean Bate. 541 pages.

Convictions. Edited by Canon Hodgson. 256 pages. Macmillan.

The Doctrine of Grace. Edited by W. T. Whitley, LL.D. 396 pages. Macmillan.

The Ministry and the Sacraments. Edited by Roderic Dunkerley, Ph.D. 560 pages. Macmillan.

OTHER BOOKS, NOT OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS, BUT CONTAINING VALUABLE MATERIAL

The Grace of God in Faith and Philosophy. By Canon Hodgson. 183 pages. Longmans.

The Church, Catholic and Protestant. By Dr. William Adams Brown. 421 pages. Scribners.

Moving Towards Unity. By E. S. Woods, Bishop of Croydon. 46 pages. S. C. M. Press, London.

The Divisions of the Church. By Rev. E. G. Parry. 45 pages. S. C. M. Press, London.

280.242
K281f